Aspects of British Electoral Politics 1867-1880

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Aspects of British Electoral Politics 1867-1880

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the development of electoral politics in Great Britain between 1868 and 1880. It focuses on the general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880 together with the intervening by-elections and explores the impact on popular politics of changes in the size and composition of the electorate as well as alterations to the electoral system arising from the 1867 Reform Act and the Ballot Act of 1872. It further argues that electoral statistics are important and useful but many historians have chosen not to use them in relation to this period because of the inherent difficulties in their measurement when there was a preponderance of multi-member seats. This is corrected by the use of an improved technique - a stratified voter methodology - to calculate these statistics more accurately and provide a more meaningful basis for analysing voter turnout, swing and related trends.

Core themes are the nationalisation of popular politics and the development of mass support for the Conservative party. These are considered through an exploration of the interaction of ideology, language and electoral politics and the ways parties sought to build their allegiances and support through ideas, language and organisation. The impact of the Ballot Act on corruption, undue influence and party organisation is investigated together with the importance of by-elections to the electoral process, emphasising their importance in the development and nationalisation of popular politics. Finally, a new survey of approximately 900 candidates' addresses is used to show the development of ideology and language, together with the construction of national party messages.

These investigations show the rapid decline of the importance of localised 'politics of place' in elections in this period but also that local organisation was important to the development of national ideology and was more extensive in 1868 than previously thought. Overall, the parties, especially the Conservatives in developing their support amongst the new electorate, are shown to have had a more adaptable and positive approach than they have sometimes been given credit for.

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Abbreviations and definitions

Abbreviations

NUCCA	National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations
PP	Parliamentary Papers
PD	Hansard's Parliamentary Debates

Definitions

North/South	South = south of a Severn-Wash line; north = north of it, not including Wales and Scotland.
Home Counties	The counties nearest to London comprising: Surrey, Kent, Essex, Middlesex, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire.

The electoral statistics used in this thesis have been prepared using a stratified voter methodology. The method of calculating votes in multi-member seats is described in Appendix I. The stratification of constituencies has been made according to their geographical location in the north or south as defined above. The stratification of English boroughs by size is set out below:

English Boroughs have been classified in size according to their electorates in 1874 so that:

Small = electorates of no more than 1,500

Medium = electorates of between 1,500 and 7,501

Large = electorates in excess of 7,500.

1874 has been used as a reasonable mid-point for the period. The same categorisation has been used for the 1868 and 1880 general elections so that the same constituencies remain in each category for all three elections in order to maintain consistency. Thus, certain constituencies may be slightly smaller than their categorisation at the 1868 general election, and slightly larger at the 1880 election. As the vast majority of constituencies grew at roughly similar rates this is not thought to produce any distortion in the interpretation of the results.

Analysis of the total electorate in English county and borough categories

	North		South	
	Number	Electorate 1874	Number	Electorate 1874
Counties	35	362,330	47	395,350
Boroughs <1,501	13	13,725	44	44,767
Between 1,501 and 7,500	33	132,481	46	161,284
Greater than 7,500	32	630,030	15	357,261

A listing of the constituencies in each category is given in Appendix IV.

Since there were far fewer constituencies in Wales and Scotland they have only been stratified between boroughs and counties.

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Introduction

> A General Election is a transcendent act in the conduct of our national government. The satirist has some reason for describing a General Election in the United Kingdom as a periodical outbreak, where, with hideous noises and uncouth shows, a turbulent mob assembles to demonstrate how small is the faculty they possess for political discrimination. We believe this does great injustice to what actually occurs. Beneath the tumult which strikes the satirist's attention there is to be found a solid core of substantial judgements on the issues of the day.[1]

I Background

This dissertation is concerned with why people voted the way they did in the three general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880 and examines the development and restructuring of electoral politics in Britain between the Second and Third Reform Acts. This introduction seeks to signpost and elaborates the main arguments of the dissertation by providing a brief summary of its key themes together with an overview of the relevant literature and certain methodological points concerning sources of evidence and data. The main findings of the dissertation suggest that a significant feature of the changes in electoral politics in this period was the growing nationalisation of the issues, language and organisation of popular politics. This is shown in subsequent chapters by an examination of candidates' election addresses published at each of the three general elections. These addresses demonstrate a remarkable consistency in the issues dealt with and the language used by candidates. They are also marked by the notable lack of local issues mentioned. These findings are also supported by a review of candidates' speeches and are further reinforced by an investigation of by-elections during the period. By-elections are shown to have provided the opportunity for the public debate of almost wholly national issues.

The dissertation further seeks to show that the increasingly national nature of electoral politics in this period was supported and encouraged by a number of changes in the environment in which electoral politics was conducted. These included significant developments in the changes to the legislative environment through the Reform Act and the Ballot Act (which brought concomitant changes in party organisation) and in the growth and influence of print media,. The following paragraphs expand on these influences and their impact on the conduct of electoral politics.

[1] *The Times*, 13 November 1869.

The first set of changes which influenced the nationalisation of electoral politics in this period arose from the impact of legislative changes on the electoral environment. The Second Reform Act of 1867 was arguably the most important electoral development of the nineteenth century, for, whilst the Great Reform Act of 1832 was intended by its creators as a final step, after 1867 there were few who doubted that the remaining steps to full adult male enfranchisement would follow.[2] As a result, the extension of the county franchise by the Third Reform Act in 1884/85 became simply an extension of those developments that had already been under way for 18 years. The majority of electors who went to the hustings in 1868 had never voted before. The Act had nearly doubled the electorate and had enfranchised more than one million, mainly working- class, electors whose political allegiances were largely untested. Despite Conservative attempts to ameliorate the potential impact of this increase through the management of the distribution of parliamentary seats, the size and nature of this change became a formative influence on the development of a party orientated national electoral politics.

Further profound changes in the conduct of electoral politics came from the 1872 Ballot Act which not only brought secret voting for the first time to British parliamentary elections but also changed the procedure for the nomination of candidates, abolishing the ancient requirement that prospective candidates mount the hustings and face the public during their selection process.[3] Other changes also came through the widening of the interpretation of the 1867 franchise provisions through judicial interpretation and legislation leading to further increases in the numbers eligible to vote.

The expansion of the electorate and the Ballot Act's changes to the electoral framework had profound effects on the organisation of political parties. An electorate which had nearly doubled in size also needed organising – at any rate that was the strong opinion of contemporaries. In an article for the *Fortnightly Review* written just after the passage of the 1867 Act, Frederic Harrison underlined the importance of organisation when he wrote:

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[2] Gertrude Himmelfarb, 'The Politics of Democracy: The English Reform Act of 1867', *Journal of British Studies*, 6 (1966), 97-138. See also J. P. Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain*, (London, 1993), p. 280 where he says the 1867 Act 'created illogical arrangements which had no claim to 'finality' and which made further change irresistible'.

[3] Jon Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair*, (Oxford, 2009), p. 45.

> There can be no doubt that that working men are not likely to arrive instantaneously at the mysteries of the sixty-one clauses and seven schedules of the Act which the House of Commons found it so hard to follow, and crowds of potential electors will not come into the register at all. This, however, is a question of time and party organisation alone. As soon as the working of the Act is properly understood, and when any adequate object is open as the prize of electioneering energy, the new engine will be exerted to its highest pressure.[4]

Developments in party organisation also contributed to the nationalisation of electoral politics in this period. The massive increase in the electorate, the abolition of the hustings and the introduction of the secret ballot also drove significant changes in party organisation. This loss of the hustings meant electors no longer declared their vote in public and the canvass and its organisation took on increased importance as the sole means of identifying a party's supporters. The ballot increased the number of polling stations which had to be monitored. There was no longer a clear-cut means of determining the progress of the vote and whether a party's known supporters had been brought to the polls. Greatly extended local organisation and techniques were needed to remedy these problems. The development of national party organisations in this period was a contributing factor to the nationalisation of politics and the growth of organisation at a national level has generally been well researched by historians. It is an important argument of this dissertation that there were also significant developments in the growth of grass-roots organisations, particularly Conservative associations seeking to anticipate and respond to the expansion of the electorate.

This growth in local organisations together with the expansion of print media is shown to have further emphasised the importance of language and rhetoric used in political communications. As a result, the period showed significant developments in the language, as well as the symbols and imagery, of the messages of the political parties.[5] The nationalisation of political discourse and the growing influence of central party organisation also meant that a consistency developed in the language and presentation of these messages.

The changing dynamics of political communication in this period and the Conservatives' suspicion of the new electorate gave them some cause for anxiety about the party political consequences of the Reform Act. Their fears seemed to be confirmed by the resounding Liberal victory in 1868. However, in 1874 better

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[4] Frederic Harrison, 'The Transit of Power', *Fortnightly Review*, 3 (1868), 374-396, pp. 375-376.
[5] See H. C. G. Matthew, 'Rhetoric and Politics in Great Britain, 1860 – 1950', in P. J. Waller (eds), *Politics and Social Change in Modern Britain: Essays Presented to A. F. Thompson*, (Brighton, 1987), .

organisation, dissatisfaction with a hyper-active Liberal government and the development of a distinctly Conservative patriotic appeal to the newly enfranchised delivered Disraeli a victory of a magnitude even he had not anticipated. It was the first Conservative victory at a general election since Peel's triumph in 1841 and although the Liberals were returned in 1880, the breakthrough in 1874 can be seen as the precursor of late-Victorian and Edwardian Conservative hegemony when that party was to rule for 17 of the 20 years after 1886. The 1880 general election saw the Liberals returned to power so that all three general elections of the period had resulted in a change in government. The Liberals, as well as the Conservatives, had now learnt some of the lessons of a period in which the party caucus developed and the implications of democracy became clear.[6] Thus, the period between the Second and Third Reform Acts arguably saw the greatest electoral changes of the nineteenth century and is profoundly important to the development of electoral politics in the later nineteenth century and beyond.

The second major influence on the development of national politics was the growth of the newspaper industry for which the 1870s proved to be a golden age. Driven by increases in literacy, developments in production technology and the spread of the electric telegraph, the newspaper industry grew at a staggering rate in the period. Between 1847 and 1877 the number of provincial newspaper titles in England increased from 230 to 938[7] and individual cities experienced similar growth – in Manchester alone the 6 titles published in 1847 had grown to 23 in 1877.[8] The growth in titles was accompanied by the fastest increase in newspaper circulation of any period in British history. This was graphically illustrated by the expansion of the *Standard's* circulation from 30,000 in 1860 to 170,000 in 1874.[9] Frequency of publication and the number of pages also increased and the period saw the introduction of mass-circulation Sunday newspapers, as well as evening papers and second daily editions of existing titles. [10]

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[6] See John Davis and Duncan Tanner, 'The Borough Franchise after 1867', *Historical Research,* 69 (1996), 306-327.

[7] Andrew Walker, 'The Development of the Provincial Press in England c. 1780-1914', *Journalism Studies,* 7 (2006), 373-386, p. 382. These figures are in turn based upon Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory (Newspaper Press Directory (London: Charles Mitchell and Co.; 1847 and 1877)).

[8] Walker, 'Development of the Provincial Press', p. 383.

[9] Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, (Oxford, 1985), pp. 31-2.

[10] Kevin Williams, *Read all about it! : a history of the British newspaper*, (Abingdon, 2010), p. 99; Lucy Brown, 'The Treatment of the News in Mid-Victorian Newspapers', *Transactions of the Royal*

Technological changes, cheaper newsprint and developing sources of income fuelled this growth.[11] Improving profitability gave newspapers greater freedom from financing by politicians, although this did not necessarily make them less partisan.[12] The development with arguably the most significant impact, however, for electoral politics was the spread of the electric telegraph. By 1868 it allowed instantaneous communication between most major towns and cities in Great Britain. The foundation of the Press Association and the nationalisation of the telegraph companies gave regional newspapers an instant source of daily political news from London and other parts of the country. [13] Pitman shorthand dramatically improved the accuracy of reporting and facilitated extensive coverage of parliamentary debates, political speeches and election campaigns.[14] An almost perfect conjunction of events allowed dramatic improvements in communications, provided the content to fill the papers, allowed cheaper pricing whilst increasing literacy provided an eager audience. The extent and immediacy of this communications revolution meant that national issues began to dominate debates as politicians came to realise their words would be communicated to the whole country. A political speech made on a Thursday in Manchester would be breakfast reading in Cornwall on Friday. This had dramatic consequences for electoral politics and enabled the nationalisation of politics and the rapid decline of the importance of the politics of place.

The next important element of this dissertation is the argument that by-elections are important to the understanding and examination of electoral politics and that their analysis also provides further evidence in favour of the nationalisation of electoral politics. By-elections were of central importance to electoral politics between the Second and Third Reform Acts but have often been ignored by historians of electoral politics and the analyses in the dissertation also to seek to partially remedy this lack of attention..[15] By-elections, it will be shown, provide important insights into the development of electoral politics in a period in which the public political sphere

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Historical Society, Fifth Series (1977), 23-39, p. 26; Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain: The Nineteenth Century*, (Chapel Hill, 1981).

[11] Williams, *Read all about it!*, p. 112.

[12] Ibid, p. 99. See also comments below on the use of print media.

[13] Brown, 'The Treatment of the News', p. 27.

[14] Williams, *Read all about it!*, p. 104.

[15] A substantial contribution to remedying this deficiency has been made by the recent publication of Thomas Otte and Paul Readman *By-elections in British Politics, 1832-1914*, (Woodbridge, 2013).

become much more 'pluralistic, representative and responsive'.[16] They were regarded by contemporaries, including politicians, commentators and the public, as important indicators of public opinion and as good predictors of the likely outcome of general elections. In the latter assumption they were generally justified. Sometimes individual by-election results needed careful interpretation because of the impact of important political issues of the day or because of the influence of particular local factors, but on the whole the results of by-elections immediately preceding general elections tended to be good predictors of the overall result of the general elections. This was particularly true of the period before the general election of 1874. The contests immediately before the 1880 general election, however, need care in their interpretation. Politicians used their results to make decisions – certainly they were considered by both Gladstone and Disraeli when making decisions on the timing of a dissolution of parliament. However, whilst there is no doubt both Prime Ministers used by-election results, ultimately Gladstone ignored their indications, called a general election and lost whilst Beaconsfield tried to interpret them, called a general election and also lost. They were also used to score political points and to mount attacks on the policies of opponents – by-elections were used this way in the run-up to the 1874 general election and during the heat of the debates over the Eastern Question.

By-elections also functioned as laboratories for the development of new techniques of party organisation and political mobilisation such as those that were felt to be needed after the Ballot Act. Most importantly they played an important role in politics generally as forums of debate on pressing issues of the day. They tended to focus on the key issues of politics which were currently being debated and provided an important forum to do so when Parliament was not in session. Changes in modes of communications in this period both enabled and courage this role. Firstly, the communications revolution of the period ensured that news and debate from a single by-election was spread immediately across the country. Secondly, a single by-election with no other competing electoral news could achieve a degree of publicity which was simply not possible at a general election when the sheer volume of results swamped the reporting of individual debates. This meant by-elections were both an agent of as well as a beneficiary of the nationalisation of politics in this period.

[16] James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, c.1815-1867*, (Cambridge, 1993), p. 146; although this phrase is taken from Vernon's work, his own point is to contend that such a development was an illusion.

The final key arguments of the dissertation relate to the importance and calculation of electoral statistics and analyses. Two key issues are addressed and suggest importantly different approaches to those currently extant in the literature. Chapter I shows that electoral statistics such as turnout and electoral swing measured for each of the three general elections show exceptional consistency across Great Britain; broadly speaking, nationwide trends tended to be followed in the vast majority of constituencies. This is a finding suggestive of the considerable analytical power of these statistics since it is difficult to conceive of this aggregate picture arising from the total effect of a large number of random factors at play in individual constituencies and are, accordingly, highly suggestive of the growing influence of national factors in electoral politics. This thesis also takes the view that electoral statistics, used in an appropriate manner with relevant caveats, can also provide illuminating insights into the development and understanding of electoral politics. The results of elections are facts which historians ignore at their peril. There is certainly no evidence that contemporaries thought this. Salisbury wrote in1884 in his article on the redistribution of seats that 'the obtrusion of statistics upon the readers of the *National Review* requires some apology', but nevertheless went on to use them at length to support his argument.[17]

The dissertation describes and uses a new, innovative and more complete methodology for the computation of such statistics from the election results of these constituencies. This issue is discussed further below in Section IV of this Introduction and Appendix I which describes the approach adopted which allows a more accurate calculation of these statistics as well as providing further insights into party strategies in multi-member constituencies. Previous methods of calculating electoral statistics for this period have suffered from the difficulties inherent in calculating such statistics when there is prevalence of multi-member constituencies and the failure of the parties to always contest the maximum number of seats in a constituency. These methods have

[17] Lord Salisbury, 'The Value of Redistribution: A Note on Electoral Statistics', *National Review*, 4 (1884), 145-162, p. 1. This matter is further dealt with Section III of this Introduction and Appendix I which show that two particular approaches deployed to undermine the use of electoral statistics, particularly for this period, are not necessarily valid. The first argument is usually based on the supposed invalidity of using of election results together with other information in order to draw certain sociological conclusions. This argument is usually found in discussions of electoral sociology and the example given of such improper use of statistics is almost always the work of Kenneth Wald. This thesis has not disputed this particular critique but simply observes that any refutation of such sociological quantitative analyses does nothing to invalidate the use of illuminating electoral statistics such as turnout and swing.

led to erroneous and misleading results which have frequently found their way into the existing literature. By way of example, it is suggested in Hanham that turnout at the 1874 general election was 79%, an increase of 3% over 1868, whereas turnout in fact fell to 72%.[18] In Rallings and Thrasher's work on British Electoral Facts turnout in England at the 1880 general election is recorded as 71% when it was closer to 78%.[19]

As should be apparent from the foregoing, a key theme of this dissertation is that British electoral politics exhibited a far greater degree of nationalisation in the 1870s than had previously been thought.[20] H. J. Hanham took the view that general elections in this period 'were not general'.[21] He went on to say:

> Only about half the seats were contested by both parties, and even when both parties were in the field with the same number of candidates, local or regional or national issues tended to be as important as those which agitated the whole of the three kingdoms'.[22]

This dissertation shows that the fact that only half the seats were contested was not indicative of any lack of generality of contest and was a legitimate and successful electoral strategy. It also shows that local and regional issues were of little importance in general elections in Great Britain.

This view that electoral politics had become far more nationalised during the period gains some support from the work of a number of historians who have suggested that the development of national politics was well under way in the period after the 1832 Reform Act.[23] These suggestions have been generally based on the voting patterns of

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[18] H. J. Hanham, *Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone*, (London, 1959), p. 193.

[19] Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher *British Electoral Facts 1832-1999*, (Aldershot, 2000), p. 99.

[20] As discussed elsewhere in this dissertation this is a view particularly espoused by H. J. Hanham (see especially Hanham, *Elections*, p. 191.).

[21] Ibid, p. 191.

[22] Ibid, p. 191.

[23] Frank O'Gorman, 'Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: The Social Meaning of Elections in England, 1780-1860', *Past and Present*, (1992), 79-115; Frank O'Gorman, *Patrons and Parties: The Unreformed Electorate of Hanoverian England, 1734-1832*, (Oxford, 1992); John A. Phillips and Charles Wetherell, 'The Great Reform Bill of 1832 and the Rise of Partisanship', *Journal of Modern History*, (1991), 621-646; John A. Phillips and Charles Wetherell, 'The Great Reform Act and the Political Modernisation of England', *American Historical Review*, (1995), 411-436; Norman Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel: A Study in the Technique of Parliamentary Representation*, (Hassocks, 1977); Gary W. Cox, *The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the development of Political Parties in Victorian England*, (London, 1987); Gary W. Cox, 'The Development of a Party-Orientated Electorate in England, 1832-1918', *British Journal of Political Science*, 16 (1986), 187-216; Gary W. Cox, 'The Development of Party Voting in England, 1832-1918', *Historical Social Research*, 41 (1984), 2-37;Philip Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work: Local and National Parties, 1832-1841*, (Woodbridge, 2002); Philip Salmon, '"Plumping Contests": The Impact of By-elections on English Voting Behaviour, 1790-1868', in Thomas Otte and Paul Readman (eds), *By-elections in British Politics, 1832-1914*, (Woodbridge, 2013), 23-50; Joseph Coohill, 'Special Issue: Texts & Studies 5: Ideas of the Liberal

the electorate[24] and the examination of party organisation.[25] Gary Cox undertook a study of voting patterns in the nineteenth century particularly of split-voting patterns in multi-member constituencies but generally concluded that the greater move to party orientated politics occurred in 1868 when there was a significant drop in the tendency of voters to split their votes between two parties.[26] A different view of split-voting was taken by Charles Wetherell and John Phillips who sought to show that the fall in split-voting in the majority of constituencies occurred after the Great Reform Act of 1832. They also undertook a number longitudinal studies of voter behaviour which suported this change.

Coohill has argued that, particularly through the study of parliamentary guides, that the 'much-discussed Victorian two party system made up of 'Liberal' and 'Conservative' identities certainly had its origins in the reform period, and not in the later 1850s'.[27] At another level of party organisation Philip Salmon has shown how the Great Reform Act was a catalyst for the formation of local registration societies.[28] As Salmon has remarked, however, what lies 'behind this rise in voter partisanship after 1832…has been thinner on the ground. Salmon's own suggestions in clude organisation and the the influence of by-elections which required voters to make single choices of candidate causing the split-voting rate to decline at subsequent general elections. Weatherall and Phillips are less clear but do note that the new electoral behaviour was grounded in local issues as well as national ones whereas this dissertation suggests that election issues were almost wholly national after 1868.[29] Notably, Norman Gash has argued that the:

> 'weakness (by modern standards) of party influence did not, however, result in a large floating vote. Too many other forms of control existed for the electorate to swing freely from one side to the other'.[30]

Party: Perceptions, Agendas and Liberal Politics in the House of Commons, 1832-52, Chapter 3. Liberal Party Control', *Parliamentary History*, 30, Issue Supplement s2 (2011), 77–98; J. A. Phillips, *The Great Reform Act in the Boroughs, English Electoral Behaviour, 1818-1841*, (Oxford, 1992); F. O'Gorman, *The Emergence of the BritishTwo-Party System, 1760–1832*, (New York, 1982).

[24] Cox, *The Efficient Secret*.

[25] Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work*; Salmon, '"Plumping Contests"'; Coohill, 'Liberal Party Control'.

[26] Cox, *The Efficient Secret*

[27] Joseph Coohil, 'Parliamentary Guides, Political Identity and the Presentation of Modern Politics, 1832- 1846', *Parliamentary History*, 22 (2003), 263-284, p. 283. See also Coohill, 'Liberal Party Control'.

[28] Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work*.

[29] Wetherell, 'The Great Reform Act and the Political Modernisation of England', p. 412.

[30] Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. xix.

It may well be, therefore, that the nationalisation of electoral politics in the 1870s was in motion after the 1832 Great Reform Act. However, as Weatherall and Phillips acknowledge, historians need to discover 'the relationship between stated principles, voter responses, and actual policy' and there needs to be more systematic general surveys of the period after the Great Reform Act concerning the the importance of political ideology, its language and its electoral impact to take forward the precise dating of the nationalisation of politics in Britain.[31]

II Historiography

The contemporary and historical analysis of the development of electoral politics in this period has been rich and diverse. Contemporary views were often expressed through the pages of the ever burgeoning range of political journals by a wide range of writers which included political journalists, commentators, MPs and former and future Prime Ministers.[32] Contemporary analysis also saw the beginnings of psephological investigations. John Biddulph Martin and Alfred Frisby both published statistical work on the three general elections which, although not often cited, have remained influential.[33] By 1902 Moisei Ostrogorski's *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties* emphasised the importance of party organisation and proposed that mass politics and the caucus were damaging to democracy. This work was to remain sufficiently influential for its 1992 edition to contain an introduction by Seymour Lipsett, a leading political sociologist whose work in the 1950s and 1960s became closely associated with a sociological approach to electoral politics.[34] Charles Seymour, writing in 1915, framed his view in the teleological Whig tradition of history when he wrote, 'a constant advance towards democracy in elections' together with 'the

[31] Wetherell, 'The Great Reform Act and the Political Modernisation of England', p. 435.
[32] Some examples of these journals are: *Contemporary Review*, *Nineteenth Century: a monthly review*, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, *Edinburgh Review*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, *Westminster Review*, and *Economist*. Prime Ministers making contributions include Gladstone, Salisbury and Asquith.
[33] John Biddulph Martin, 'The Elections of 1868 and 1874', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 37 (1874), 193-230. Alfred Frisby, 'Voters not Votes: The Relative Strength of the Political Parties as shown by the last two General Elections', *Contemporary Review*, 38 (1880), 635-646. The work by Martin was used without modification by Hanham for all his statistical analyses of the elections in Elections and Party Management. The work by Frisby formed part of the basis for J. P. D. Dunbabin, 'Parliamentary Elections in Great Britain, 1868-1900: A Psephological Note', *English Historical Review*, 81 (1966), 82-99. Some statistical analysis of the 1874 election is contained in J. P. Parry, *Democracy and religion: Gladstone and the liberal party, 1867–1875*, (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 381-410.
[34] M. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties, Volume 1: England*, (London, 1902 (1982)).

continual transfer, bit by bit, of electoral power from the land-owning classes and the commercial plutocracy to the masses' which was 'the thread which runs through the various phases of electoral development'.[35]

Developments after the First World War saw the continued importance of high political writing and generally the continuance of this conventional Whig interpretation but there were also significant developments in social and labour history. Jon Lawrence has characterised these as giving rise to a three phase model of nineteenth-century popular politics. The first phase was seen as beginning with early radical challenges which culminated in the Chartist movement in the 1840s. This was followed by a mid-Victorian period of peace and quiescence and, finally, there was a return to radical conflict after 1880.[36] This model and its explanations, he argues, carried through into the work of Marxist historians in the 1960s, particularly E. P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawn.[37] As Neville Kirk has pointed out this model of discontinuity did not go unchallenged at the time and formed part of the Marxist/anti-Marxist debate of that period. It was also, as described below, to receive further challenges to its validity from writers such as Gareth Stedman-Jones, Eugenio Biagini and Patrick Joyce.[38]

The 1950s and 1960s also saw developments in the field of political science influence other approaches concerned with the impact of social class on voting behaviour. This led to the development of electoral sociology, which Lawrence and Miles Taylor characterised, in the historical context, as the interpretation of 'voting patterns since 1832 as the expression of underlying social forces'. Electoral sociology, they said, meant that people's electoral choices were 'not based on rational assessment, but on unseen social forces, tradition and habit'. [39] As a result the ideological role of political parties was of little relevance and their principal purposes were in the

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[35] Charles Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales: The Development and Operation of the Parliamentary Franchise 1832-1885*, (Newton Abbot, 1970 (1915)), p. vii.
[36] Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914*, (Cambridge, 1998), p. 13; see also Jon Lawrence, 'Popular Radicalism and the Socialist revival in Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (1992), 163-186.
[37] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (New York, 1966); Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: From 1750 to the Present Day*, (London, 1968).
[38] Neville Kirk, *Change, Continuity and Class: Labour in British Society, 1850-1920*, (Manchester, 1998), pp. 1-13. See also for example: Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982*, (Cambridge, 1983), Eugenio F. Biagini, *Liberty, retrenchment and reform : popular liberalism in the age of Gladstone, 1860-1880*, (Cambridge, 1992) and Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848-1914*, (Cambridge, 1991).
[39] Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor, 'Introduction: electoral sociology and the historians', in Lawrence and Taylor (eds), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820*, (Aldershot, 1997), 1-26, p. 1.

organisation of already committed supporters and in the provision of 'group solidarity' for their supporters.[40] They suggested this approach was promoted by a number of historians including H. J. Hanham, D. C. Moore, John Vincent, T. J. Nossiter, James Cornford and P. F. Clarke.[41] Thus, following this interpretation, they suggested Hanham was principally concerned with the effect of the 1867 Reform Act on party organisation in the 1870s and Vincent saw the formation of the Liberal party as the binding together of elements of different social classes but in an electoral structure which was essentially pre-industrial.[42] Cornford and Nossiter both made use of electoral statistics in the consideration of the impact of social class. Most of these writers used some non-Marxist concept of class as part of their explanations - Clarke, for example, saw the later nineteenth century as the transition from 'status politics based on shared values and identities (of which religion was a prime example) to class politics based on material interests'.[43]

The advent of post-structuralist and post-modernist thinking in the 1980s and 1990s, together with its associated 'linguistic turn' produced a series of works which focussed on the language, ideas and discourses of politics. Some of the first of these studies came from Stedman Jones in his research on the language of Chartism wherein he explored the contention that the 'growth and decline of Chartism was a function of its capacity to persuade its constituency to interpret their distress or discontent within the terms of its political language'.[44] He was clear that these and other studies had a larger purpose in becoming 'increasingly critical of the prevalent treatment of the 'social' as something outside of, and logically – and often, though not necessarily, chronologically – prior to its articulation through language'.[45] Lawrence has rightly questioned his 'narrow definition of political discourse' which tends to be limited to

[40] Ibid, pp. 6-7.
[41] Hanham, *Elections*; John Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party, 1857-1868*, (London, 1966); T. J. Nossiter, 'Recent Work On English Elections, 1832-1935', *Political Studies*, 18 (1970), 525-528; T. J. Nossiter, *Influence, opinion and political idioms in reformed England: case studies from the north-east, 1832–1874*, (Brighton, 1975); James Cornford, 'The Transformation Of Conservatism In The Late Nineteenth Century', *Victorian Studies*, 7 (1963), 35-66, (p. 35); P. F. Clarke, 'The Electoral Sociology of Modern Britain', *History*, 57 (1972), 31-55.
[42] Hanham, *Elections*; Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party*; Catherine Hall and Keith McClelland and Jane Rendall *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the Reform Act of 1867*, (Cambridge, 2000); Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party*, p. 9 and p.11.
[43] Lawrence, *Speaking*, p.23.
[44] Jones, *Languages of Class*, p. 96.
[45] Ibid, p. 7.

the ‘formal public discourses of political organisations’, together with the degree of commitment which Stedman Jones exhibits for the linguistic turn.[46]

One of the most enthusiastic advocates of the linguistic turn was Joyce who focussed on the various discursive practices central to working class life and through which workers made sense of themselves and the world around them.[47] The core of his research was class and he argued that there were ‘social identities and shared visions of the social order that did not emerge from, nor derive their legitimacy from, the language of class’.[48] It is also relevant to observe that Joyce took a fairly extreme line in the adoption of postmodernist epistemology, for in his view ‘Language does not correspond to a social referent outside it’ and ‘it is … very difficult to conceive of a structure of class relationships, or a structure of any set of ‘social’ variables (occupation, income, etc.), as lying objectively outside the observer’.[49]

The other prime exponent of the post-modernist view emphasising the importance of the linguistic turn has been James Vernon.[50] His intention was to offer a new ‘cultural history of the meanings of politics – a history of its subjectivities and identities, the ways in which politics defined and imagined people – which in turn provides, at least in my reading, a new narrative of nineteenth century English political history’.[51] Vernon’s central argument was ‘the idea of English political culture as an arena of struggle in which competing groups contested each other’s definitions of the public political sphere according to their interpretation of the constitution’.[52] Thus, the measured introduction of parliamentary reforms, far from being a steady progression towards democracy, was, instead, designed to restrict and control public participation in politics. Taken together with the development of the ‘print media’ at the expense of oral traditions and the growth of mass party organisation, this contributed to the closure of the public political sphere. Examples of this process were the 1832 Reform

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[46] Lawrence, *Speaking*, p. 52.
[47] Joyce, *Visions*; the quote is from Chris Waters, 'Review of Visions of the People', *Social History*, 17 (1992), 513-516, p. 513.
[48] Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England*, (London, 1982); Joyce, *Visions*; Patrick Joyce, 'The Imaginary Discontents of Social History: A Note of Response', *Social History*, 18 (1993), 81-85; Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England*, (Cambridge, 1994). See also Waters, 'Review of Visions of the People'.
[49] Patrick Joyce, *Class*, (Oxford, 1995), p. 6.
[50] Vernon, *Politics*; James Vernon, 'Who’s Afraid of the “Linguistic Turn”? The Politics of Social History and its Discontents', *Social History*, 10 (1994), 81-97; James Vernon, *Re-Reading the Constitution: New Narratives in the History of England’s Long Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge, 1996).
[51] Vernon, *Politics*, p. 6.
[52] Ibid, p. 7.

Act which reduced public participation in politics to the extent that it brought greater order to the hustings and the 1872 Ballot Act which had an even greater impact by abolishing the hustings altogether. The problems with this argument have generally centred on the lack of evidence both of intentionality on the part of legislators and hard evidence that the public political space was in fact substantially reduced by these factors.[53] It is also revealing that one of the leading supporters of a post-structuralist view should consider that the structure of the electoral system should have such an important influence on the nature and development of popular electoral politics.

More difficult to place in the development of the historiography is the work of Biagini. His principal work, *Liberty, retrenchment and reform: popular liberalism in the age of Gladstone, 1860-1880*, was published after much of Stedman Jones's work and just after Joyce's *Visions of the People*. Its arguments include a detailed commentary on the language of popular Liberalism seeking to show the connections between its language, rhetoric and ideas with the language and ideas of the popular radical tradition, Cromwell and a strong puritanical practice tinged with a Calvinist sense of predestination. Despite this he makes no attempt to locate his approach in a post-modernist framework, addressing instead the issue of why the working-classes should have lent such significant support to a party which was still led by a highly refined aristocratic elite. Biagini rejects class, in its Marxist sense, as an explanation and instead suggests that Liberalism provided for its working-class supporters 'a more satisfactory collective consciousness than did class identity'.[54]

Finally, the early 1990s saw the start of a new approach to the study of mid- to late-Victorian electoral politics which has grown from the work of Lawrence and Taylor, the former in particular.[55] This approach was founded on their critique of electoral sociology which they charged with being empirically wrong, deterministic and reductionist. Instead, a new approach was proposed which held that, to the extent there is any relation between social reality and the nature of popular politics, it is highly contingent and political parties are to be regarded as active agents in the formation and development of politics. The corollaries of this view have been that locality is afforded precedence over 'national' analysis and greater importance has

[53] This is discussed further in Chapter II and shows, for instance, that at the 1868 general election the nomination of candidates at the hustings appears to have no effect on candidate selection.
[54] Biagini, *Liberty, retrenchment and reform*; see also: Eugenio F.Biagini and Alistair J. Reid, *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914*, (Cambridge, 1991).
[55] Taylor, 'Electoral sociology'.

been given to the significance of ideas and language. This revisionist critique has become a new orthodoxy which has produced significant benefits in adding to the richness of historical understanding particularly with regard to the importance of language, ideology and locality.

An important corollary of these developments has been the exploration of the impact of gender in electoral politics. Jon Lawrence's seminal article *Class and Gender in the Making of Urban Toryism* has been followed by a number of important works.[56] These have led to a more nuanced and diverse understanding of the role of women in electoral politics and the 'extent of women's political agency within cultural, societal and economic constraints'.[57] The examination of women's political role has involved work on the conception of 'family as a site for public debate rather than as a private, de-politicised state'.[58] More directly, in electoral politics there has been more research on and much greater recognition of the use of feminine imagery, the direct involvement of women in election campaigning including canvassing and through the exercise of patronage.[59] This focus on the part played by women in electoral politics has, in addition, also stimulated new research and insights into differing versions of masculinity and its importance in the electoral politics of the period.[60]

Lawrence and Taylor's landmark essay, 'Electoral sociology and the historians', was first published in 1997.[61] Since then there has been flourishing development of studies expanding some of the themes developed by the critique of

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[56] Jon Lawrence, 'Class and Gender in the Making of Urban Toryism, 1880-1914', *English Historical Review,* (1993), 628-652. See also: Catherine Hall Keith McClelland Jane Rendall, *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge, 2000); Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley, 1995); Anna Clark, 'Gender, class and the constitution: franchise reform in England, 1832-1928', in James Vernon (eds), *Re-reading the Constitution: New Narratives in the Political History of England's Long Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge, 1996), 239-253; Sarah Richardson, 'Politics and Gender in the nineteenth century', in Chris Williams (eds), *Blackwell's Companion to Nineteenth Century British History*, (Oxford, 2004), ; Mathew Cragoe, 'Jenny Rules the Roost: Women and Electoral Politics, 1832-68', in Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson (eds), *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860: The Power of the Petticoat* 2000), ; Ben Griffin, 'Class, Gender and Liberalism in Parliament, 1868-1882: The Case of the Married Women's Property Acts', *Historical Journal*, 46 (2003), 59-87;

[57] Richardson, 'Politics and Gender in the nineteenth century', p. 4.

[58] Ibid, p. 4; Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*.

[59] See, for example, pp. 99-101 below on the role of the Marchioness of Westminster in the Shaftesbury by-election of 1873. Also for the direct roles of women see Patricia Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government, 1865-1914*, (Oxford, 1987).

[60] Keith McClelland, "England's greatness, the working man", in Catherine Hall and Keith McClelland and Jane Rendall (eds), *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge, 2000), 71-118.

[61] Taylor, 'Electoral sociology'.

electoral sociology. More work has appeared focussing on the richness and detail of the electoral politics of particular localities.[62] More individual general elections have also received specific attention and there has been more emphasis on previously less explored areas of electoral politics (by-elections' for example).[63] As part of the recognition of the instrumentality of electoral politics and the continuing influence of the linguistic turn there has been more stress on the importance of issues in determining voter choices and in the language and imagery used in the communication of those issues.[64] These approaches have developed their own questions and there has been an increasing focus on the development of working–class Conservative support during the second half of the nineteenth century.[65]

Following from these developments two of the major themes of this thesis are party organisation and the issues and ideas of political discourse during the elections. These two themes are related. Post-electoral sociology approaches have emphasised that political parties are not the passive beneficiaries of social change and to be successful needed to embrace the contingent nature of their appeal. This means that political parties needed to construct their allegiances and support and did this through the use of language and ideas. These languages and the vocabulary and imagery which they employed needed to be communicated to the electorate and this had to be achieved through party organisation. In this conception party organisation is not just, or even, about the centralisation of party control or the administrative aspects of arranging canvassers or ensuring known supporters got to the polls. It is much more

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[62] Examples include: Lawrence, *Speaking*; Mathew Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales, 1832-1886* (Oxford, 2004); Alex Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism in Imperial London, 1868-1906*, (Woodbridge, 2007); Matthew Roberts, '"Villa Toryism" and Popular Conservatism in Leeds, 1885-1902', *Historical Journal*, 49 (2006), 217-246; Michael Markus, 'A Pocket Borough? Reformed Politics in Ripon, 1832–67', *Parliamentary History*, 27 (2008), 330-360, V. C. Barbary, 'Reinterpreting 'Factory Politics' in Bury, Lancashire, 1868–1880', *Historical Journal*, 51 (2008), 115-144; Marc Brodie, 'Voting in the Victorian and Edwardian East End of London', *Parliamentary History*, 23 (2004), 225-248.

[63] Examples include: Paul A. Readman, 'The 1895 General Election and Political Change in Late Victorian Britain', *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), 467-493; Paul A. Readman, 'The Conservative Party, Patriotism, and British Politics: The Case of the General Election of 1900', *Journal of British Studies*, 40 (2001), 107-145; Richard Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class*, (London, 1972); Otte and Readman (eds), *By-elections in British Politics*.

[64] For example: Parry, *Democracy and religion*; J. P. Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism: English Liberalism, National Identity and Europe, 1830-1886*, (Cambridge, 2006); Paul A. Readman, 'Patriotism and the Politics of Foreign Policy, c. 1870 – c. 1914', in William Mulligan and Brendan Simms (eds), *The Primacy of Foreign Policy in British History, 1660 – 2000*, (London, 2010), 260-276; Luke Blaxill, 'The Language of British Electoral Politics: A Study of Party Image', (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 2012).

[65] Matthew Roberts, 'Popular Conservatism in Britain, 1832–1914', *Parliamentary History*, 26 (2007), 387-410; Readman, 'The 1895 General Election'.

about the on-going grass roots party organisation which was responsible for the communication of party ideas and values. As a result, there is a focus on organisation at a grass roots level.

Of course, once it is accepted that ideas were important factors influencing electoral behaviour in the period, then the language in which those messages were expressed and the way this language was used in the mediation of political constructs and conceptions by political parties become equally important. Accordingly, in Chapter 3 of the dissertation, dealing with electoral issues, there has been an emphasis on determining some forms of commonality in expression in order to identify with greater accuracy the precise words being used. However, the reception and understanding of political messages is highly complex and, even at this point, it must be recognised there are difficulties in understanding and assessing how a particular issue, expressed in a particular way, impacted on voter behaviour and how it interacted with other issues.

III The use of electoral statistics

We have seen how criticisms of electoral sociology have emphasised the importance of locality. This has led to the questioning of the utility, and even the validity, of using electoral statistics as important historical evidence. In particular, Lawrence has criticised the so-called 'Nuffield-style' and 'ecological' studies of individual election campaigns in three main ways.[66] Firstly, he believes that the aggregation of election data across constituency boundaries' is invalid. In his view most historians have 'insisted that, since Westminster politics were determined by constituencies of unequal size, votes should not therefore be aggregated across constituency boundaries' and they have suggested that 'it is very difficult to incorporate local election data into broad aggregate surveys'.[67]

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[66] A classification of approaches to the analysis of elections in the Victorian and Edwardian periods was proposed by Nossiter (Nossiter, 'Recent Work On English Elections'). He suggested that they were firstly a Nuffield campaign study, and example being Lloyd's study of the 1880 general election (Trevor Lloyd, *The General Election of 1880*, (Oxford, 1968)). The second type was an ecological or social geography approach, an example being Pelling's geographical work (Henry Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections, 1885- 1910*, (London, 1967)). The third approach was a sociological analysis of individual and group voting behaviour of which Vincent's work on poll books was an example (John Vincent, *Poll Books: How Victorians voted*, (Cambridge, 1967)). Lawrence regarded the introductory analysis, covering the years 1885-1906 in Neal Blewett's work on the 1910 elections as an ecological analysis. (Neal Blewett, *The Peers, The Parties and The People: The General Elections of 1910*, (London, 1972)). (Taylor, 'Electoral sociology', p. 17).

[67] Jon Lawrence and Jane Elliott, 'Parliamentary Election Results Reconsidered: An Analysis of Borough Elections, 1885–1910', *Parliamentary History,* 16 (1997), 18-28, p. 17. The references given

Secondly, he has claimed that the use of statistics with other data of a sociological nature cannot yield meaningful or valid historical results. This claim is illustrated by reference to the work of Kenneth Wald, which attempts to correlate voting patterns with social and economic data. Lawrence correctly points out that one of the problems of this form of analysis is that electoral districts are not congruent with the districts used to collect social and economic data, such as that collected from censuses. Wald attempted to overcome this by using larger aggregated surrogate units in order to provide congruity for the two sets of data but Lawrence thought this approach lost the 'peculiarities of place' and these units could 'in no sense have been identical'.[68] (More recently Alex Windscheffel has noted that the use and interpretive analysis of electoral data has been driven by the dominance of the electoral sociological model and that we need to 'be sceptical of the epistemological utility of such approaches'.[69]) The main example of this criticism is also a repudiation of Wald's work for similar reasons to those put forward by Lawrence.[70] Lawrence's third and final criticism is that Hanham, together with T. J. Nossiter, apparently considered that the 'viability of psephological techniques stemmed from the fact that there appeared to be substantial continuities between voting behaviour in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'.[71] The precise nature of this criticism is not completely clear, but it is probable that he and Taylor thought it was an approach which suggested the same sociological explanations of voting behaviour derived from the 1950s and 1960s could be applied to the nineteenth century and was based on the belief that voters and parties behaved in both periods in fundamentally the same manner.[72]

Taking each of these criticisms in turn, the evidence underpinning the first point regarding aggregation over constituency boundaries is less than solid. In making his claim, Lawrence cites as supporting evidence Dunbabin's analysis of regional trends in his article 'British Elections in the 19th and 20th Centuries'. In this article Dunbabin says he aggregates seats rather than votes because it is a method that 'can be

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for the claim that most historians think this are J. P. Cornford, 'Aggregate election data and British party alignments, 1885-1910', in E. Allardt and C. Rokkan (eds), *Mass politics: studies in electoral sociology*, (New York, 1963), 107-116, p. 110 and J. P. D. Dunbabin, 'British Elections in the 19th and 20th Centuries: A Regional Approach', *English Historical Review*, 95 (1980), 241-267, p. 243.

[68] Elliott, 'Parliamentary Election Results', pp. 19-20; Kenneth D. Wald, *Crosses on the Ballot: Patterns of British Voter Alignment Since 1885*, (Princeton, 1983). Wald's work would have been classified as a sociological study in Nossiter's scheme.

[69] Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism*, p. 5.

[70] Ibid, p. 6.

[71] Taylor, 'Electoral sociology', p. 9. Hanham, *Elections*; Nossiter, 'Recent Work On English Elections'.

[72] Taylor, 'Electoral sociology', p. 9.

applied with greater certainty to the confused politics of the 1920s when many seats often lacked either a Liberal or else a Labour candidate'.[73] In fact, Dunbabin makes no mention of constituencies of unequal size. It is also difficult to see how Dunbabin can regard the general aggregation of data as a problem since his work is based on the aggregation of seats won, which is susceptible to the same arguments as the aggregation of any other data from different constituencies. The other piece of evidence cited by Lawrence in support of this view is the way in which aggregate election data is used in Cornford's article 'The Adoption of Mass Organisation by the British Conservative Party'.[74] In this case the evidence is also unclear. The reference is to Cornford's discussion of the computation of the Conservative share of the vote in elections from 1885 to 1910 where he makes the simple point that because the number and location of uncontested seats varied from election to election, it is necessary to compute the change in each party's share of the vote from election to election by using 'seats contested at both pairs of elections'.[75] This appears to be an entirely justifiable approach and follows the general methodology for allowing for uncontested seats followed by Biddulph Martin, Frisby, Dunbabin and Parry.[76] It is also the method used in this thesis as described more fully in Appendix I.

In the case of Wald's work the difficulties concerning the analyses of the social composition of parliamentary constituencies can be readily conceded, and his work should certainly be treated with great caution. However, these difficulties simply cannot be a relevant argument for the suppression of the use of other electoral statistics for other uses in different contexts.[77] Finally, the suggestion that the valid use of statistical techniques, solely with reference to nineteenth-century elections with no underlying assumptions about the nature of electoral motivation, in some way depends on there being substantial continuities between voting behaviour in two centuries is, at best, bizarre. It is difficult to see how the usefulness of such statistics as turnout or a party's percentage share of the vote can depend on the application of an electoral sociological model of the elections in the US and UK in the 1950s and 1960s to the

[73] Elliott, 'Parliamentary Election Results', p. 18; Dunbabin, 'British Elections in the 19th and 20th Centuries'.
[74] James Cornford, 'The Adoption of Mass Organisation by the British Conservative Party', in E. Allardt and Y. Littunen (eds), *Cleavages, Ideologies and Party Systems: Contributions to Political Sociology*, (Helsinki, 1964), 400-424, p.110.
[75] Cornford, 'Aggregate election data', p.110.
[76] Martin, 'The Elections of 1868 and 1874'; Frisby, 'Voters not Votes'; Dunbabin, 'Parliamentary Elections in Great Britain'; Parry, *Democracy and religion*, pp. 369-410.
[77] Hanham, *Elections*, p. 191.

1870s. This point suggests the possible conflation of the use of the word 'psephological' as used by Lawrence and Taylor and the use of electoral statistics, psephology, as used by most others.[78]

In contrast, this thesis takes the view that this emphasis on locality has been taken too far in denying the ability to make cross-constituency comparisons and denying that aggregation can provide interesting and useful historical insights. This view is founded on two broad propositions. Firstly, the findings of this thesis concerning the nature of the issues debated by candidates at general elections and by-elections during the period clearly show a significant consistency across constituencies, regions and countries. Secondly, it is difficult if not impossible to believe that the consistency of the patterns of voting and trends at local, regional and national levels of aggregation simply arise from the serendipitous aggregation of trends individually and randomly generated at single constituency level. The patterns of partisanship of particular constituencies similarly cannot be explained by independent local influences simultaneously producing the same results over time. As Parry has said 'Historians of elections have discerned an increasingly uniform national pattern to swings in voter allegiance from the 1870s'.[79] This remark is also supported by the work of Gary Cox who showed that there was a dramatic fall in the tendency of voters in multi-member constituencies to split their votes between candidates of different political parties from the general election of 1868 onwards.[80] These trends offer powerful evidence of the nationalisation of politics in this period.

There is no doubt that electoral statistics have to be used with appropriate caution and judgement but these conclusions suggest they are a valuable and useful tool. Having accepted this utility there, nevertheless, remain some significant practical difficulties in their computation and application to this period. As noted above, much of the statistical work on this period is based on two contemporary works by Biddulph Martin and Frisby, Hanham's statistical analyses being almost wholly based on Biddulph Martin's work. Both of these works are unsatisfactory, restricting the comparison of constituencies to those contested at more than two successive elections,

[78] There is little other evidence of many historians rejecting the use of electoral statistics. In addition, Lawrence and Windscheffel also use psephological analyses. Lawrence analyses turnouts and the social composition of constituencies.[78] Windscheffel, also presents a number of statistical analyses in an appendix although he also includes a 'brief discussion of electoral statistics, reinforcing' many of his criticisms.(Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism*, p.6 footnote 27).
[79] Parry, *Rise and Fall*, p. 222; Nossiter, *Influence, opinion and political idioms*, pp. 181-3.
[80] Cox, *The Efficient Secret*, for example p. 103.

omitting constituencies without explanation and not extending their coverage to the three general elections in the period. Many of these problems arise from the difficulties of dealing with multi-member constituencies and uncontested seats and this dissertation offers a new methodology (described in Section IV below and Appendix 1) for computing electoral statistics over the three general elections. This provides a new and much more comprehensive analysis of those statistics which shows new and different conclusions from those currently in the literature.

IV Other historiographical issues

Apart from this gap in the literature concerning electoral statistics there are a number of other substantive, issues concerning the analysis of electoral politics during the period. The first is that the 1870s have been comparatively neglected by historians. An example of this neglect is evident from the number of general elections in the mid- to late-Victorian period which have been the subject of individual publications. The general elections of 1895, 1900, 1906 and the two of 1910 have all received such attention whilst only that of 1880 has been the subject of individual study in the period 1868-1880.[81] There are a number of factors which have contributed towards this neglect. The most important of these is what Windscheffel has called the electoral climacteric of 1885/6 when the redistribution of seats, the extension of the franchise and the Liberal/Unionist split over Home Rule arguably transformed the political landscape, although this thesis would not regard this as so transformational as the events of 1867-1880. In addition, the move to single member constituencies and the redistribution of seats in 1884/5 resulted in the elimination of most two member seats, the disappearance of old constituencies and the creation of new ones together with many boundary changes to those constituencies which did remain. This makes the comparison of constituency results very difficult between the elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880 and those which came after. One suspects that this may be an unspoken significant practical reason for historians' lack of equivalently detailed engagement with the 17 years before 1885 as compared to the 25 years from 1885 to 1914.

A second issue concerns Hanham's *Elections and Party Management* which remains the principal work on the period and an invaluable source of reference and

[81] The only election study in the period is Lloyd's for 1880. (Lloyd, *The General Election of 1880*). Subsequent general elections have been dealt with by: 1895 - Readman, 'The 1895 General Election'; 1900 - Readman, 'The Conservative Party, Patriotism, and British Politics'; 1905 - A. K. Russell, *Liberal Landslide: The General Election of 1906*, (Newton Abbot, 1973); 1910 - Blewett, *The Peers*.

detailed research. [82] Inevitably, however, for a work written more than 50 years ago, it does not reflect more recent developments in the study of electoral politics. Thus, the work does not cover new areas of interest such as the importance of language and ideology and Hanham's emphasis on the importance of influence on electors' voting preferences now appears to be overdrawn. This has been particularly important in recent work which has sought to present Conservative electoral success with the working-classes in a positive light, highlighting the importance of Conservative ideology and appeals to the electorate to show 'how active, constructive and integrative the tories were, both on the public platform and in the press'.[83]

IV Methodology and sources

Section III of this Introduction has argued that electoral statistics remain an important and useful analytical tool in exploring the history of electoral politics. It briefly noted that a new methodology and calculations had been developed to provide more accurate electoral statistics than those hitherto available. Appendix I gives full details of the approach and shows it produces electoral statistics which are importantly different from those currently available. This approach is a stratified voter methodology which firstly, enables the stratification of statistics according to the size and location of a constituency and, secondly, proposes an approach to deal with the problems of measuring electoral statistics from the polls of multi-member constituencies where electors had more than one vote. Frequently, electors did not use all of their votes and as a consequence the number of votes cast in a poll in one of these constituencies does not bear any fixed relationship to the number of electors voting. The number of electors voting provides the usual basis for calculating statistics such as turnout , share of the vote (and, as a result of that, electoral swing) and whilst in a single member constituency where electors have one vote this is obviously the number of votes cast, it is much more difficult to determine in a multi-member constituency.

This dissertation suggests a solution which builds on methodology put forward by Frisby and adds to this by using actual vote counts, when these are available, which show the actual number of electors voting because they give the numbers who plumped for a single candidate and the numbers who split their vote between different parties. Where these counts are not available the methodology uses certain surrogate

[82] Hanham, *Elections*.
[83] Roberts, 'Popular Conservatism in Britain'.

statistics on plumping and split-voting to enable a more accurate estimate to be made of the number of electors voting. This methodology has been used to adjust, where necessary, the poll results for every constituency in Great Britain for each of the three general elections in the period. To the best of my knowledge, this has not been done before for all three elections and provides for the first time overall statistics which are more accurately calculated and which are based on all constituencies. A corollary benefit has been that the database constructed to make these calculations may be used to readily provide different analyses of the data. For example, figures for turnout in northern English boroughs with an electorate in 1874 of over 7,500 can be readily calculated. This enables the preparation of many analyses based, for example, on regions and the size and nature of constituencies. This approach, accordingly offers a methodological toolbox and a database and, unless otherwise stated, all electoral statistics referred to in this thesis have been calculated using its techniques.

A wide range of other historical sources have been used in the preparation of this thesis. The core data used in the preparation of the electoral statistics referred to above have been obtained from Craig's work on British Parliamentary Elections and from McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book.[84] Where the two differ, in the absence of further and better information Craig has been preferred and the reader's attention drawn to the discrepancy where this could be material.

Much of the analysis in Chapter III on Issues, Chapter V on Organisation and Chapter VI on By-elections has utilised newspaper resources and reference has been made to physical holdings in the British Library Newspaper Library. However, the majority of research has been carried out using recently digitised newspaper sources. The recent digitisation of nineteenth-century British newspapers has transformed our ability to search large numbers of newspapers for relevant information in a time frame which would not otherwise have been possible using manual techniques.[85] By way of example, this enabled the identification of nearly one thousand candidates' election

[84] F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885*, (Dartmouth, 1989); J. Vincent and M. Stenton *McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book: British Election Results 1832-1918*, 8th edn, (Brighton, 1971).

[85] The British Newspaper Archive http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/help/about#collection. Other significant databases of newspapers and contemporary journals which have been used include: 19th Century UK Periodicals http://find.galegroup.com/ukpc/start.do?prodId=NCUK&userGroupName=kings; The Times Digital Archive http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/0/1/1/purl=rc6_TTDA?sw_aep=kings; The Economist Historical Archive http://find.galegroup.com/econ/start.do?prodId=ECON&userGroupName=kings; and British Periodicals http://britishperiodicals.chadwyck.co.uk/marketing/index.jsp.

addresses covering the three general elections. It has also, for instance, enabled the identification of local political organisations and some of their activities when there is little other evidence available from local and national archive sources. Whilst there is nothing new in using newspaper sources the ability to rapidly search such large volumes does qualitatively change the nature of the evidence obtained.

Newspapers also present their own particular methodological issues when used as historical sources. Newspapers do more than report news: they document their producers own social attitudes and beliefs.[86] To some extent the use of newspapers in this dissertation is less susceptible to methodological issues arising from the use of newspaper sources. Newspapers have been used as the primary source for candidates' addresses but these were included in newspapers as paid advertisements, were independently written by candidates and their supporters and were, accordingly, wholly uninfluenced by journalists or newspaper owners (the placement of an address in a particular publication might naturally be influenced by a newspaper's political adherence simply to target the likely supporters of a candidate). Thus, in the case of addresses there is no difference between finding these documents in newspapers and finding individual printed copies in the archive.

Election results are in themselves purely factual and, therefore, unlikely to have been influenced by political bias (although, of course, the stories surrounding their reportage almost certainly are). Speeches, however, require greater care. Firstly, speeches tended to be reported mainly by the newspapers supportive of the political position of the candidate making the speech and when the speeches of opponents were reported they were often in truncated form where the editing had been undertaken by a perhaps less than disinterested reporter. Secondly, although the introduction of Pitman shorthand or the supply of pre-speech printed copies theoretically ensured greater

[86] Stephen Vella, 'Newspapers', in Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (eds), *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from 19th and 20th Century History*, (Abingdon, 2009), 192-208, p. 192. These issues have been reviewed in a number of important works on the press, particularly in respect of nineteenth-century print media including: Koss, *The Political Press*; James Curran and Pauline Wingate George Boyce *Newspaper History: From the 17th Century to the Present Day*, (London, 1978); Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950*, (Chicago, 2004); Mark Hampton, '"Understanding Media": Theories of the Press in Britain, 1850-1914', *Media, Culture and Society*, (2001), 213-231; Alan Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press* (London, 1976); Joseph S. Meisel, *Public Speech and the Culture of Public Life in the Age of Gladstone*, (New York, 2001); John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch*, (Oxford, 2003); James Thompson, *British Political Culture and the Idea of 'Public Opinion', 1867–1914*, (Cambridge, 2013); Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*; Brown, 'The Treatment of the News'; Williams, *Read all about it!*; Bill Bell and David Finkelstein Laurel Brake *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, (Basingstoke, 2000); Aled Jones and Lionel Madden Laurel Brake *Investigating Victorian journalism*, (London, 1990).

accuracy in reportage the final printed report may not have been exactly what the speaker said.[87]

V Structure

The remainder of this thesis seeks to develop the issues which have been sketched out in this Introduction. Chapter 1 gives some general information and analyses of the 1867 Reform Act and the general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880. Electoral swing, turnout and other election statistics are analysed using the new methodology previously described.

Chapter II explores further the changes in the electoral framework. It first explores the implementation and impact of the Ballot Act. It uses election results before and after the Act to question whether electoral influence was as important as some historians have suggested. It then considers changes in the impact of electoral violence and election expenses over the period. Chapter III discusses issues, ideology, political language and rhetoric in the context of the general elections. It utilises a survey of nearly 1,000 candidates' election addresses to analyse issues at the elections and the language and rhetoric which was used to present them. It shows that these issues were overwhelmingly national and that there were important developments in Conservative political rhetoric.

Chapter IV deals with party organisation particularly the way in which this had to respond to the changes in framework and language. It does this primarily by concentrating on local Liberal organisations and the development of Conservative organisations aimed at the working classes at constituency level which was much more extensive than previously thought. Chapter V considers by-elections in the period which have been largely ignored by historians in the context of changes in political opinion over the period and in the context of electoral issues and political discourse. Finally, Appendix I deals certain issues concerning multi-member constituencies and with the methodology used to calculate the electoral statistics used in this dissertation.

[87] See Paul A. Readman, 'Speeches', in Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (eds), *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from 19th and 20th Century History*, (Abingdon, 2009), 209-225.

Chapter I The general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880

I Introduction

This chapter provides some background to the dissertation by undertaking a consideration of the 1867 Reform Act and of the results of each of the three general elections in the period. The chapter offers a number of original interpretations of the general election results in the period. Firstly, and most significantly the original methodology used for the calculation of election statistics has enabled accurate computations of such statistics as electoral swing and turnout than have hitherto been available. Indeed, as has been shown, there are few available statistics for this period and those that deal with all three general elections are misleadingly inaccurate. The statistics presented in this chapter and Appendix II present more accurately computed figures – more accurate, it is contended, than any of those previously presented by scholars. Secondly, the election results and related statistics are analysed in relation to constituencies of different size and geographical location. Again this has not previously been presented for all of the three elections; doing so enables a more analytical review of the results and their related causes.[1] This analysis is, for instance, particularly relevant in analysing the results of the 1874 election and the supposed disaffecting impact of the Education Act on non-conformist Liberal voters, which is frequently quoted, following Gladstone himself, as a reason for the government's defeat.[2] As is shown later in the chapter the geographical analysis of election results demonstrates that in places where non-conformity was more prevalent the Liberals tended to do better in 1874, so showing that any non-conformist disaffection was, in fact, of little significance in 1874.[3]

A further feature of the chapter is an analysis turnout which is unique in its accuracy and its application to all three general elections. This analysis has been used to demonstrate Cornford's proposition that Conservative success in late-Victorian and Edwardian elections was associated with low turnouts has no support in the three

[1] Ref to Parry

[2] Richard Shannon, for instance has quoted non-conformist disaffection as an issue. See Richard Shannon, *Gladstone: God and Politics*, (London, 2007), p. 258; Richard Shannon, *The Crisis of Imperialism 1865-1915*, (London, 1974); p. 97.

[3] This analysis conforms with the conclusions of Parry. See Parry, *Democracy and religion*, pp. 398-404.

general elections under consideration. The analysis of turnout also provides a corrective to the figures provided by Hanham which have been shown to be inaccurate. There has been little historical analysis of uncontested seats particularly the exploration of the factors which led to a lack of a contest and the political activity, if any, which took place.[4] This section of this chapter seeks to remedy this position. Finally, the section on non-concurrent polling deals with another issue which has not been addressed by historians of electoral politics in this period.

II The 1867 Reform Act and its implications

The borough occupation franchise introduced by the 1867 Reform Act was the single most important development in electoral reform before 1918. Of the three Reform Acts of the nineteenth century that of 1867 produced the greatest proportionate increase in the electorate and laid the foundations for the extension of the borough household and tenant franchises to the counties in 1884/5.[5] It has been remarked that the Act of 1867 'was one of the decisive events, perhaps the decisive event, in modern English history' for whilst household suffrage in the boroughs was several steps removed from universal suffrage, 'once this first step was made, no one seriously doubted that the others would follow'.[6]

There were four main aspects of the Reform legislation. Firstly, the Act extended the franchise in the boroughs to all male rate-paying householders who satisfied a one year residence requirement. Secondly, the Hodgkinson amendment to the Act abolished compounding, the practice whereby landlords paid the rates for their tenants, a practice which, under the draft legislation to that date, would have immediately disenfranchised some 500,000 voters because they did not pay their rates personally. Now all tenants would have to pay directly and therefore qualify for the vote.[7] Thirdly, a £10 lodger franchise was introduced for the boroughs, although this was to prove largely irrelevant because very few registered under its provisions.

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[4] Lloyd's article gives numbers of uncontested seats in the period 1852-1910 but provides less in the way of analysis. See Trevor Lloyd, 'Uncontested Seats in British General Elections, 1852-1910', *Historical Journal*, 8 (1965), 260-265.

[5] Seymour, *Electoral Reform*, p. 482, note 1.

[6] Himmelfarb, 'The Politics of Democracy', p. 97.

[7] John K. Walton, *The Second Reform Act*, (London, 1987), p. 18. This was also a disaster for the collection of rates by local authorities and the little known and unsung 1869 Poor Rate Assessment and Collection Act effectively re-established the practice of compounding whilst still giving the tenant the vote, thus completely reversing the intention of the original Act.

Finally, the property rental value for the county franchise was reduced to £12. In addition, Disraeli sought to maintain the importance of the county seats, which were generally Conservative strongholds, in three other ways; firstly, he abolished the right of any borough householder to vote in the election for the county in which his borough was situated. Secondly, he packed the boundary commission with Conservatives so as to improve the geographical position of the counties and limit the impact of the increase in the franchise in smaller constituencies. Finally, the Act included significant changes in the distribution of seats, designed to particularly favour the counties where the Conservatives were strongest.

The relative effects of these changes were the most dramatic of any reform legislation in British history. The Act resulted in a 97% increase in the electorate in Great Britain to approximately 2.4 million voters. The statute contained many anomalies and required some time to implement consistently, so that this increase was further augmented as the new provisions of the legislation were gradually adapted and by 1884 the electoral register had grown to approximately 2.96 million, an increase of 23% that far outstripped the rate of growth of the adult male population over the same period. The nature of the franchise changes meant that by far the greater increase in the electorate was in the boroughs. Table I/1 shows the increase in electors in the UK split between the counties and boroughs.

Table I-1 Increase in electors in Great Britain as a result of the 1867 Reform Act

Counties	289,000
Boroughs	830,000
Total	1,119,000
Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885*, (Dartmouth: Parliamentary Research Services, 1989) and own calculations.	

There was concern amongst Conservative supporters that the newly enfranchised workers would more naturally support the Liberal party, but later writers have suggested that Disraeli was more confident about the immediate political impact of household suffrage because although the absolute figures for the increase in the borough electorate were large, their immediate impact needed to be considered in conjunction with the distribution of seats. A number of factors combined to dilute the potential impact of the franchise increase on the number of seats held by the Conservatives. Firstly, as we have noted, Disraeli's redistribution was biased in favour

of the counties. The legislation made available 52 seats through a combination of the disenfranchisement of corrupt boroughs, the total disenfranchisement of certain small boroughs with a population of less than 10,000 and the reduction of the representation of certain other boroughs with a population of less than 10,000 from two members to one. Of these 52 seats 25 went to newly created county seats in England, of which 22 were won by the Conservatives at the subsequent 1868 election. Some 17 seats went to newly created boroughs of which 4 were won by the Conservatives in 1868.[8] Only 4 additional seats were allocated to the existing large boroughs which were responsible for 100,000 of the increase in the electorate. At the same time the Act introduced the so-called minority clause which restricted an elector to two votes in three member constituencies (three in London which had four members). The practical effect of this, as was its intention, was to enable the minority party to gain a seat where they had not previously been represented. Finally, there were huge disparities in size between the constituencies unaffected by the distribution changes which meant that a significant part of the absolute increase in the electorate was confined to relatively few constituencies. As is shown in the following section the impact of these measures and the election campaign itself meant that in 1868, in Great Britain, the Conservatives only lost a net 8 seats to the Liberals compared to 1865.

Although the reforms had dramatically increased the electorate there was a proportion of the adult male population which still failed to reach the electoral registers after the Act. The main provisions of the Act had been to extend the franchise in the boroughs by the establishment of the householder franchise. In 1871 the total population of the parliamentary boroughs in England and Wales was approximately 10.6 million. Assuming similar distributions of ages and sexes in this cohort as in the population as a whole this means there were approximately 2.5 million men of voting age in the boroughs. After making an estimate for the number of plural voters, the borough electorate amounted to some 1.2 million men, meaning that approximately 1.3 million men of voting age had not been captured by a franchise which was considered to have established, at least as far the boroughs were considered, universal suffrage.[9]

[8] Paul Smith, *Disraeli: A Brief Life*, (Cambridge, 1996), p. 147.

[9] This line of resoning and its questions mirrors, of course, the debate over the 'missing' electorate of the Edwardian period and the debate set out in a number of key works, in particular : Blewett, *The Peers*; R. I. McKibbin and J. Kay H. C. G. Matthew, 'The Franchise Factor in the Rise of the Labour Party', *English Historical Review*, 91 (1976), 723-752; J. A. Kay P. F. Clarke, R. I. McKibbin and H. C. G. Matthew, 'Liberals, Labour and the Franchise', *English Historical Review*, 92 (1977), 582-590; and D. M. Tanner, 'The Parliamentary Electoral System, the 'Fourth' Reform Act and the Rise of Labour in

The characteristics of the nineteenth-century electoral system which led to the exclusion of adult males from the registers fell into two broad categories – exclusions arising from the nature of the franchise and those arising from the administration of the system. In order to obtain the vote an adult had to be male and could not be an alien, criminal, lunatic or peer of the realm and having satisfied these requirements had to show that he qualified under one of the franchises. Nineteenth-century reform legislation was additive such that each enactment added different franchise qualifications without repealing or amending previous qualifications. However, if a man did not qualify under one of these categories he was not entitled to vote and there were a number of categories of men who were likely to be excluded because of this. These included the young, because they were less likely to be married and as a result to have acquired their own qualifying residence; that is to say they were single men who lived with their parents or in circumstances where they did not occupy a room which was 'occupied separately as a dwelling'. In principle, those living in other accommodation could seek to claim the tenant franchise but this required the tenement to have a clear yearly value of £10.[10] Thus, those who could not afford accommodation of this value or who lived in areas of low property values could be deprived of the vote.

In two important articles which have focussed on the impacts of the 1867 Act Tanner and Davis have argued that as the difficulties inherent in the practical application of the complexities of the Act were gradually overcome the borough electorate expanded at a rate significantly in excess of the population growth and that, whilst the franchise remained restrictive it was restrictive 'in a random and vexatious way' and 'its own inadequacies prevented it from discriminating in the way that its authors intended and many later authorities have assumed'.[11] However, whilst it is true that the borough electorate did grow faster than the borough population between the

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England and Wales', *Historical Research*, 56 (1983), 205-219. Whilst much of this work focussed on the system after the Third Reform Act, the period after the Second Reform Act has been addressed in J Davis, 'Slums and the Vote, 1867-90', *Historical Research*, 64 (1991), 375-388 and Tanner, 'The Borough Franchise'. The latter work contains an important analysis of the development of the application of the Second Reform Act. Tanner argued in his earlier work (1983) that factors in the electoral system which caused this disenfranchisement were 'random' and similarly argues in this work that the process 'ensured that the limited pre-1918 franchise nevertheless displays an unexpectedly wide social variation' and 'generalisations based upon the assumption that a limited electorate was also one which had been in some conscious way socially selected are therefore dangerous' (ibid, p.306).

[10] There were slight differences in the rating and value between England & Wales and Scotland – Blewett, *The Peers*, p. 33.

[11] Davis, 'Slums and the Vote', pp. 376 and 388.Tanner, 'The Borough Franchise'.

Second and Third reform acts this did not occur at a sufficiently fast enough rate to impact materially on the level of 'missing voters' and the whilst the impact of the 1867 Act could be random and vexatious' it remained very largely notable for its 'bias against the working class' and the 'residuum'.[12]

The remainder of this chapter presents analyses of the results of the general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880. The analysis of the results of these elections is complicated by the fact that a large number of constituencies returned more than one member, usually two. As was briefly described in the Introduction this gives rise to a number of difficulties in calculating certain electoral statistics such as electoral swing and turnout. This issue is discussed extensively in Appendix 1 which sets out the methodology created for this thesis. The electoral statistics analysed in this chapter and the remainder of this thesis are based upon this methodology.

The chapter proceeds by a review of the results of each of the elections. There follows a brief discussion of the issue of turnout utilising the more accurate figures produced by the new methodology. Finally, there are two sections which deal with uncontested seats and the issue of non-concurrent polling.

III The general election of 1868

The 1868 election took place after one of the longest campaigns of any Victorian general election. The minority Conservative administration had been defeated in April on the issue of the disestablishment of the Irish Church and rather than resign immediately Disraeli waited until the new registers necessitated by the Reform Act had been completed, so that the election could take place under the new franchise. This was a complicated exercise carried out as of the end of June and took some time to complete. Eventually, parliament was dissolved in November and polling took place between 17 November and 7 December.

As was almost universally expected the Liberals were victorious and their majority over the Conservatives in Great Britain was marginally increased to 87 compared to 71 in 1865. They retained a majority in Ireland giving them a lead over all parties in the United Kingdom of 116 seats. Disraeli broke with precedent and resigned before parliament met, leaving the way open for Gladstone to form his first

[12] Tanner, 'The Borough Franchise', p. 386.

administration. Table I/2 shows the distribution of seats between the parties in Great Britain in 1865 and 1868.

Table I-2 The general election of 1868 - number of seats

	1865	Change	1868
Great Britain			
English Counties			
Conservative	94	28	122
Liberal	51	-3	48
English Boroughs	†	†	
0-1500			
Conservative			31
Liberal			29
1500-7500			
Conservative			34
Liberal			96
>7500			
Conservative			22
Liberal			69
Total English Boroughs			
Conservative	115	-28	87
Liberal	200	-6	194
Total England			
Conservative	209	0	209
Liberal	251	-9	242
Wales			
Conservative	14	-4	10
Liberal	18	5	23
Scotland			
Conservative	11	-4	7
Liberal	42	9	51
Universities			
Conservative	6	0	6
Liberal	0	3	3
Total Great Britain			
Conservative	240	-8	232
Liberal	311	8	319
Liberal Majority	71		87

Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and own calculations. In 1868 in the English Boroughs Bridgwater and Beverley returned two Liberals and two Conservatives respectively and were disenfranchised after petitions relating to that election; accordingly their results have been excluded from the 1865 and 1868 figures throughout this dissertation to provide easier comparison to the subsequent two elections. For the classification of English boroughs see Definitions. † Because of the 1867 Act's franchise, disenfranchisement and redistribution provisions, a categorisation of the English boroughs in 1865 by the size of electorate would not be meaningful.

It can be seen that the Conservatives strongly improved their position in their key stronghold, the English counties. In 1865 they held 64% of the seats in that category and in 1868 this had grown to 72% of the available seats. These gains in the counties were heavily influenced by Disraeli's redistribution in favour of those constituencies. Certain boroughs were either disenfranchised entirely or had their representation reduced to one seat and certain large county seats were divided to create two replacement constituencies. As we have seen, the Act had made a net new 25 seats available for the English counties. In addition, 15 seats were abolished making 42 new county seats of which the Conservatives promptly won 36 and the Liberals only 6. The Liberals had previously held 6 seats in the abolished counties giving them a net gain of nil whereas the Conservatives had held 11 giving them a net gain 25 as a result of Disraeli's reorganisation. However, the introduction of the minority clause for constituencies with three seats meant that the Liberals were able to make gains of 5 seats out of the 7 constituencies in this category. Finally, the Conservatives made inroads into the existing Liberal seats in the counties capturing a net 8 seats as the new county electorate favoured the Conservatives. As a result of these changes the Conservatives made net gains of 28 seats in the counties and the Liberals net losses of 3 seats. It does seem that there was a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Whigs and a reluctance to support the disestablishment of the Irish Church which Gladstone had made the main issue of the election although Parry has argued that Liberal performance was creditable in the circumstances and was to some extent helped by Gladstone's insistence the Irish Church disestablishment presented no threat to the Church of England.[13]

Liberal strength continued to be in the boroughs, although the Conservatives retained some strength in the smaller constituencies. The impact of redistribution in the category of constituency was also complex. After 1865 17 seats were made available by the total disenfranchisement of certain constituencies either because of corruption or because they were regarded as too small and disenfranchised under the 1867 legislation. Of these 17 the Conservatives had previously held 9 and the Liberals 8 so that the impact on party strength was evenly balanced. The Act reduced the representation of 35 two-seat constituencies to one member. Again the impact was balanced as the Conservatives had held 17 and the Liberals 18 of these seats. Overall

[13] A. F. Thompson, 'Gladstone's whips and the general election of 1868', *English Historical Review*, 63 (1948), 189-200, p. 193; Parry, *Democracy and religion*, pp. 275-276.

18 additional seats were added to the English boroughs with 13 going toward the creation of new constituencies and 1 to an additional seat in Salford. Finally, two constituencies were created in London, Chelsea and Hackney, each with two members. Single seat constituencies were created in 9 new boroughs, almost wholly in the new industrial towns in the north except for Gravesend in the south. Of these 14 new seats the Liberals won 11 at the 1868 election. The remaining 4 seats went towards creating 3 seat constituencies in the large industrial cities of Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester. The minority clause had been designed to try and lessen Liberal gains in these constituencies but was not wholly successful. In Birmingham Liberal organisation ensured they won all 3 seats and in Leeds the Conservatives already held a seat. Finally, Liverpool was already a wholly Conservative constituency so it was in fact the Liberals who benefitted from the operation of the clause in the boroughs. The net result was the Liberals lost 13 seats in the changes to English boroughs compared to the Conservative losses of 21.

Of particular interest, however, are the 131 remaining English boroughs which retained the same number of MPs as 1865 but whose aggregate electorate increased by 440,000 or 117%. There was an exceptional degree of turnover in these boroughs; 51 changed hands with the Liberals gaining 29 seats but the Conservatives also gaining 22, for a net gain to the Liberals of 7 seats. In English boroughs with electorates of up to 1500 voters, the Conservatives, despite their fears, maintained a small advantage holding 31 seats compared to the Liberals' 29. The Liberals held a distinct advantage in the larger English boroughs. In those with electorates between 1501 and 7500 the Liberals held 96 seats to the Conservative's 34. They maintained a similar dominance in the largest English boroughs with electorates in excess of 7500 with 69 seats compared to the Conservative's 22. Interestingly, amongst these largest boroughs the Conservatives held more in the North (16) than in the South (6), because of the Conservative success in Lancashire which accounted for 11 of these 14 seats.[14]

The final effects of redistribution were in Wales and Scotland. Wales received an additional seat allocated to the borough of Merthyr Tydfil, which, unsurprisingly, the Liberals won. In addition, the Conservatives lost 4 more seats, which reduced their

[14] These were Stockport 1, Preston 2, Blackburn 2, Bolton 2, Salford 2, Manchester 1 and Liverpool 1. See for instance Hanham, *Elections*, pp. 284 – 322; John Vincent, 'The Effect of the Second Reform Act in Lancashire', *The Historical Journal*, 11 (1968), 84-94; J. C. Lowe, 'Tory Triumph of 1868 in Blackburn and in Lancashire', *Historical Journal*, 16 (1973), 733-748; Parry, *Democracy and religion* pp. 275-277; R. L. Greenhall, 'Popular Conservatism in Salford 1868 – 1886', *Northern History*, 9 (1974), 123-138.

representation to 10 seats in the principality. The *Cheshire Observer* was quite clear about the situation in Wales, reporting that:

> There [North Wales] nothing has prevailed against the popularity of the Irish Church measure, the Welsh Dissenters believing that the Liberal policy in Ireland foreshadows events in Wales. It cannot be imagined that the Irish are liked in Wales any more than Lancashire; the reason for the victories the Liberals have gained in the former can only be the popularity of the general principle of religious equality.[15]

Scotland was allocated 7 additional seats. Two went to the creation of two university constituencies. The burghs received three extra seats and two went to the counties.[16] The Liberal dominance of the Scottish constituencies continued with them holding 51 of the 58 Scottish seats in 1868. The Conservatives lost county seats in Scotland largely because of continuing disputes between tenant farmers and landowners over land and game laws.[17]

A contemporary writer, R. Dudley Baxter, published an analysis of the election results, although it should be remembered in considering his work, that he was a confirmed Conservative and a member of the law firm which dealt with the affairs of Disraeli and the Conservative party.[18] He noted that in Scotland, Wales and Ireland, the church question was unfavourable to the Conservative party 'since the bulk of the population are not adherents to the Established Churches'.[19] However, he also noted that:

> In England, the Church feeling was against the Liberal party, bringing over many voters to the Conservative side, and counteracting much of the Liberal effect of the immense enfranchisement in the Boroughs, while it increased the Conservative effect of the rural enfranchisement in the Counties.[20] It is interesting to note that as a Conservative he thought the Tory losses 'a mere nothing' given 'so great an enlargement of the suffrage.[21]

A novel part of his analysis was that despite having fewer members in the Commons the Conservatives represented a larger proportion of the population than the Liberals. Given that this arose because of the large unenfranchised population in the counties, to some this must have smacked of a desperate attempt to present the defeat in a better light.

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[15] *Cheshire Observer*, 5 December 1868.
[16] Michael Dyer, *Men of Property and Intelligence: The Scottish Electoral System prior to 1884*, (Aberdeen, 1996), pp. 100-121.
[17] I. G. C. Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland 1832-1924: Parties, Elections and Issues*, (Edinburgh, 1986), p.106.
[18] R. Dudley Baxter, *The Results of the General Election*, (London, 1869).
[19] Ibid, p. 6.
[20] Ibid, p. 6.
[21] Ibid, p. 11.

IV The general election of 1874

Table I/3 below shows the number of seats held by each party after the general elections 1868 and 1874 respectively analysed by major categories of constituency.

Table I-3 The general election of 1874 - number of seats

	1868	Change	1874
Great Britain			
English Counties			
Conservative	122	20	142
Liberal	48	-20	28
English Boroughs			
0-1500			
Conservative	31	6	37
Liberal	29	-6	23
1500-7500			
Conservative	34	29	63
Liberal	96	-29	67
>7500			
Conservative	22	15	37
Liberal	69	-15	54
Total English Boroughs			
Conservative	87	50	137
Liberal	194	-50	144
Total England			
Conservative	209	70	279
Liberal	242	-70	172
Wales			
Conservative	10	4	14
Liberal	23	-4	19
Scotland			
Conservative	7	11	18
Liberal	51	-11	40
Universities			
Conservative	6	1	7
Liberal	3	-1	2
Total Great Britain			
Conservative	232	86	318
Liberal	319	-86	233
Liberal Majority	87		-85

Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and own calculations. In the English Boroughs Bridgwater and Beverley returned two Liberals and two Conservatives respectively and were disenfranchised after petitions relating to the 1868 election accordingly their results have been excluded from the 1865 and 1868 figures to provide easier comparison to the subsequent two elections. For the classification of English boroughs see Definitions.

The by-election results of 1873 had been unremittingly bad for the Liberals. There were 34 during the year and of the 14 contested they lost 9. These contests showed

double digit swings against the Liberal's 1868 position, including the loss of one Liberal seat in Gladstone's own Greenwich constituency. These results had been of considerable concern to Gladstone as indicators of the general mood of the electorate and the growing lack of public confidence in his administration. Gladstone's diary shows a first consideration of a general election as late as 18 January 1874 and on Friday 23 January the Cabinet approved the dissolution and, after amendment, Gladstone's address.[22] The first report of the unexpected dissolution was leaked, probably by Gladstone, so that it appeared in *The Times* of Saturday 24 January.[23] The country moved into a short and sudden campaign, the new parliament being expected to meet in the first week of March.[24] The period from dissolution on the 26 January to the final contest on 17 February gave a potential maximum campaign period of 21 days. This was in practice much shorter and within 15 days 63% of constituencies had declared and the Conservative victory accepted.

Overall the Conservatives gained 113 seats and lost 33 giving them a net gain of 80 seats compared to the 1868 general election result and turning a previous overall Liberal majority of 87 in Great Britain into a Conservative majority of 50 over all parties and 85 over the Liberals in Great Britain, the Home Rule party having gained 60 seats, mainly from the Liberals, in Ireland.[25] Further analysis shows that the Conservatives made net gains of seats in the United Kingdom as a whole and in all countries except Ireland, where they lost 5 seats and the Liberal vote permanently collapsed. In Great Britain the Liberal share of the vote declined by 5.1% to 54.0%. The Liberals continued to poll a majority of voters, as they did in each of the elections from 1868 to 1880 but this was an inevitable consequence of the widely different sizes of constituencies and because Liberal support tended to be concentrated in larger, northern, Scottish and Welsh boroughs with much higher electorates than the smaller southern Conservative seats. Accordingly, the Liberals always had to poll more voters per MP than the Conservatives until the redistribution changes of 1884-85 and, as a result, the geographical distribution of the parties' strength was an important factor.

Wales remained more Liberal along with the north of England although the swing to the Conservatives was higher. The Liberals lost three Welsh county seats and

[22] H. C. G. Matthew, *The Gladstone Diaries with Cabinet Minutes and Prime Ministerial Correspondence*, (Oxford, 1982), pp. 442-447.
[23] See also section III of Chapter III dealing with the addresses of the party leaders.
[24] *The Times*, 24 January 1874.
[25] All gains and losses have been measured from the result of the 1868 general election.

two boroughs with one gain. Carmarthenshire was lost after the Conservatives organised themselves better and fielded only two candidates compared to three in 1868 whilst the borough of Carmarthen was lost on a large 14% swing to the Conservatives. Monmouth District was lost and Pembroke District was gained.

The Scottish boroughs had all been held by the Liberals in 1868 and were to be again in 1880. In 1874, however, they lost three seats; Ayr District by 14 votes as the borough went with the county. Wigton was lost by only two votes with a swing of 3.6%. More surprisingly a seat was lost in Glasgow assisted by Liberal disorganisation and internal division as five Liberal candidates stood for the three seats. The Liberals fared much worse in the Scottish counties; in 1868 they had won 25 of the 32 seats. In 1874 they lost 8 with an overall swing to the Conservatives of 7.2%. Ayrshire had been hotly contested since 1832 and this time the Conservatives gained both seats, in Ayrshire South the Liberal surrendering without a contest. The situation was similar in a number of other seats. The Conservatives also gained Roxburghshire which had been solidly Liberal since 1841.They now held all but one of the seats south of the Clyde and the Liberals in the Highlands were of the distinctly Whiggish variety.[26] These results represented a high point of Conservative success in Scotland during the period.

Above all, however, the Conservative victory was achieved in England and, most particularly, southern England.[27] As can be seen from the table, 70 (81%) of the Conservative net gains were made in England, with 39 of these (49% of the total) being made in southern English boroughs. Indeed the Conservatives would still have held a parliamentary majority without any gains outside of southern England. The results also emphasised the continued Conservative dominance of the English counties where they gained a further 13 county seats in the south. Two seats, Surrey West and Sussex East were lost by the Liberals because they failed to find any candidates despite having returned members in a contest in 1868. Six others were won by the Conservatives in the Home Counties with large swings in their favour and the remainder were seats which had been marginals in 1868, and which were captured on swings of less than 2%.[28] In total, 8 of the 13 gains were therefore in seats in the Home Counties where growing middle class influences were probably more important than the disaffection of Whig magnates.

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[26] Parry, *Democracy and religion*, p. 393.
[27] See *Definitions* for the delineation of northern and southern constituencies.
[28] See *Definitions* for the delineation of constituencies in the Home Counties.

The collapse of the Liberal vote in the south and its significant decline in the large southern boroughs (66% of which were in London) was much greater than the decline in turnout and suggests that there were significant conversions of Liberal voters rather than abstentions, resulting in a swing to the Conservatives in the south of some 10%, compared to 3.3% in the north and 8.4% for the boroughs in Great Britain as a whole. There was a swing back to the Liberals in 1880 but this was not uniform and helps provide some indication of what was happening in 1874. The small English boroughs swung back to the Liberals in 1880 and in these constituencies the Conservative share of the vote was marginally lower in 1880 than 1874. Scotland and Wales swung back in 1880 to their 1868 position but the home rulers maintained their position in Ireland. In 1874 there was a swing against the Liberals in all parts of the kingdom and all types of constituency except for the smaller English boroughs.

In the northern English counties the Conservatives made net gains of 6 seats, winning eight but losing two in Durham and Derbyshire South. Gains were made in the marginal seats of Derbyshire East and the West Riding Southern Division. The remaining 6 seats were gained after the Liberals' failure to contest seats they held in Lincolnshire (Mid and North), Staffordshire (East and North) and Nottinghamshire.

In aggregate the small English boroughs showed a lesser swing than the larger boroughs, however this result needs to be treated with some caution. Of 44 southern English boroughs with an electorate of 1500 or less 12 were not contested in 1874 and four constituencies (Bridgnorth, Westbury, Abingdon and Bewdley) showed exceptional swings against the Conservatives and if these are excluded the swing in contested small southern boroughs was similar to those of greater size. The Conservatives lost 4 seats and gained 9 in the smallest southern boroughs. Three of the gains were in the Home Counties and one subject to clear patronage, Shaftsbury, changed hands as the largest local landowner, the Marchioness of Westminster, became a Conservative. In two other constituencies where patronage was thought to be influential one, Woodstock, showed a 3.7% swing to the Conservatives and the other, Hertford was uncontested in 1874.

Parry suggests that apart from the smallest boroughs 'the smaller and more southerly the borough the more marked the swing to the Conservatives was likely to be'. This, however, may be based on reviewing swings after excluding the four

constituencies with exceptionally large swings to the Liberals described above. [29] The swing to the Conservatives was greater in the larger constituencies both in the north and south of England. The Conservatives greatest gains were made in the medium sized southern English boroughs with electorates between 1,500 and 7,500 voters. There was a great deal of change in this category of seats with 31 of the 81 seats changing hands; the Conservatives losing 7 and gaining 31 for a net gain of 24, 38% of the gains they made in total across the country. Certain local factors undoubtedly influenced these results. Fear of redundancies from Gladstone's potential reductions in defence expenditure probably led the naval dockyard seats (for example Chatham, Devonport, Plymouth, Portsmouth and Gravesend) to vote solidly for the Conservatives who, as a result, gained 6 seats in the medium sized of these boroughs and 2 in the largest. Proximity to London also provided a reliable guide. The Conservatives made 10 gains in the largest southern English boroughs and 9 of these were in London where the balance of the parties was now Conservatives 10 and Liberals 12. Liberal ill-discipline showed itself in London where in 3 constituencies (Chelsea, Southwark and Tower Hamlets) additional Liberal candidates split the Liberal vote allowing in a Conservative. The most striking changes, however, were in the larger English boroughs. Hanham suggested that 'the big English boroughs after a comparatively small swing of three per cent in 1874 reacted so violently against the Conservatives in 1880 that the Conservative proportion of the poll fell below the 1868 level'.[30] This needs some modification because the larger southern boroughs recorded high swings to the Conservatives in 1874 and, significantly, many of these gains were held in 1880 and the Conservatives retained a significantly higher percentage of voters than in 1868 with a lower swing back to the Liberals in 1880.

V The general election of 1880

The 1880 general election resulted in a Liberal landslide. The Liberals more than reversed their losses of 1874, achieving an overall majority over all other parties of 52 seats, despite the loss, since 1868, of 62 seats in Ireland to the Home Rulers. The Liberal majority in Great Britain was 123 seats, compared to 87 seats in 1868 and 67 in 1865. The victory was achieved with an overall swing against the Conservatives of 4.8%.

[29] Parry, *Democracy and religion*, p. 395.
[30] Hanham, *Elections,* p. 194.

Table I/4 below shows the number of seats held by each party in 1874 and 1880 analysed by major categories of constituency.

Table I-4 The general election of 1880 - number of seats

	1874		1880
Great Britain			
English Counties			
Conservative	142	-26	116
Liberal	28	26	54
English Boroughs			
0-1500			
Conservative	37	-8	29
Liberal	23	8	31
1500-7500			
Conservative	63	-29	34
Liberal	67	29	96
>7500			
Conservative	37	-19	18
Liberal	54	19	73
Total English Boroughs			
Conservative	137	-56	81
Liberal	144	56	200
Total England			
Conservative	279	-82	197
Liberal	172	82	254
Wales			
Conservative	14	-10	4
Liberal	19	10	29
Scotland			
Conservative	18	-12	6
Liberal	40	12	52
Universities			
Conservative	7	0	7
Liberal	2	0	2
Total Great Britain			
Conservative	318	-104	214
Liberal	233	104	337
Liberal Majority	-85		123

Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and own calculations. For the classification of English boroughs see Definitions.

The Conservatives lost slightly fewer seats in the south (38) as compared to the north (44) and the swing against them was lower in the south at 4% as compared to 6% in the north. They remained strong in the English counties particularly in the south where they held 75 of the 100 seats, an improvement on their position in 1868, but in England

as a whole they lost 26 seats compared to 1874. In the north they came under heavy attack where they lost a further 17 seats in the counties. Four of those were lost in the traditional stronghold of Lancashire where Derby's defection may have been an influence. Another four were lost in the West Riding of Yorkshire although these were traditionally more closely fought seats.

A remarkable feature of the 1874 general election was the progress made by the Conservatives in the larger borough constituencies in the south of England especially in London. In Hackney, for instance, the Conservative share of the vote increased from approximately 13% in 1868,[31] to 45.7% in 1874 and although this fell back to 34.7% in 1880 this position was still well in excess of the 1868 level. In boroughs in the south of England with an electorate in excess of 7,500 the Conservative share of the vote was 35.7% in 1868 and 47.0% in 1880. This was due to the maintenance of their vote in 1880 in the major London constituencies, as well as Brighton and Greenwich. As a result although the Conservatives lost 38 seats compared to 1874 they still held 38% of the total, an improvement on 1868. This together with a creditable showing in the southern counties reflected the maintenance of gains they had made in 1874 in London and the south-east. The constituencies that were gained in 1874 and retained in 1880 are set out in Table 1/5 and the preponderance of seats in London and the south-east can be observed.[32]

[31] In 1868 the calculation of voting shares is complicated by the fact that there were 3 Liberal and 2 radical candidates whilst the Conservatives fielded only one candidate in the two member seat (as they also did in 1974 and 1880).The voting analysis from the poll books is not available, although the voting analysis is available for 1874 and 1880. This shows that the split voting rate was 0.36% in 1874 and 0.26% 1880. In addition, the 1874 election had to be re-run on 25th April 1874 after the Court ruled that the original election was invalid because of the lack of organisation which saw some polling stations failing to open for the correct periods of time. At the re-run election the Conservative share of the vote, based upon the available poll analysis, was 43.8% and the turnout was 47.8%. In 1880, also based upon the available poll analysis, the Conservative share was 34.7% and the turnout 62.7%.

[32] See also Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism*, pp. 39-40.

Table I-5 English constituencies in which the Conservatives made gains in 1874 which were retained in 1880

Canterbury	Portsmouth
Chatham	Surrey, East
Devonport	Surrey, West
Dover	Sussex, East
Essex, South	Tower Hamlets
Greenwich	Westminster
Guildford	Wigan
Hertfordshire	Wilts, North
Lincolnshire, Mid	Wilts, South
London	Windsor
Middlesex	
Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and own calculations.	

In Wales the Conservatives were obliterated, ending up with only 4 of the 33 seats. These 4 were all in the counties: Carmarthenshire, where Viscount Emlyn won one of the seats (with another Conservative splitting the vote against one Liberal), Denbighshire where Sir Watkin Wynn shared the seat unopposed with a Liberal; and Monmouthshire where the Conservatives won both seats. Cragoe noted that in Wales 'the focal point of the election was Gladstone's campaign against the Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria and the foreign policy of the Conservative government which had sanctioned them'.[33] In Scotland the outcome was similarly bleak for the Conservatives with a swing of 6% in favour of the Liberals. The Conservatives lost all of their gains made in 1874, including their solitary burgh seat, so that in 1880 they had no representation outside the counties, where the held only 6 of 33 seats.[34] Overall the Liberals held 81 seats compared to the Conservative's 10 in the British Celtic fringe. The election results came as a surprise to most commentators. It was certainly completely unexpected by Salisbury and even Liberal supporters, who had forecast victory, were surprised by its extent.[35] Explanations for the Liberal success were, as usual, plentiful but there were some common themes. The prosperity of the early- and mid-1870s had been replaced by a trade recession together with a severe agricultural depression caused by a series of bad harvests and the transformation of the world

[33] Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity*, p. 73.
[34] Dyer, *Men of Property*, pp. 122-145.
[35] Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, (London, 2010), p. 238; 'The Past Election', *Fraser's Magazine*, (1880), 711-720; 'The General Election', *New Quarterly Magazine*, (1880), 432-443.

cereals markets due to the extension of the railroads to the American prairies.[36] Liberal party organisation was considered to be much improved compared to 1874 – there were certainly fewer cases of Liberals fighting Liberals, as had happened in 1874.[37] The National Liberal Federation was active and, unsurprisingly, Joseph Chamberlain thought the impact of the influence of the Birmingham caucus across the constituencies had been significant.[38] Salisbury seemed to accept that the result provided a condemnation of his foreign policy.[39] Finally, this resurgence by the Liberals may have reflected greater Whig commitment to the Liberal campaign.[40]

One of the consolations grasped by the Conservatives after this result was that the election had been a close run thing despite the size of the Liberal majority. Salisbury also raised this issue in 1881 in his assessment of the electoral process.[41] He said:

> It is undoubtedly the case that if some two thousand men, distributed over those constituencies where the contest was nearest, had voted otherwise than as they did, the dissolution would not have resulted in a Liberal majority.[42]

This theme was reiterated by a contemporary statistical work which showed that there were some 72 seats won by the Liberals where the Conservatives were within 10% of the Liberal vote.[43] It was also shown that there were 58 Liberal victories with an absolute majority of fewer than 100. These results were reproduced in Lloyd's work on the 1880 general election and give the impression that 1880 was in some way more closely fought than other general elections of the period.[44] In fact in 1880 there were 71 seats in which the Conservative vote came to within 10% of the Liberal vote, which can be compared to 62 and 51 in 1874 and 1880 respectively.[45] Whilst this shows there

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[36] Lloyd, *The General Election of 1880*, p. 136; T. E. Kebbel, 'The Conservative Party and the Late Election (June 1880)', *Nineteenth Century: a monthly review*, 7 (1880), 1057-1064; T. A. Kebbel, 'A Conservative View of the Elections', *Nineteenth Century*, 7 (1880), 905-916; Peter Marsh, *The Discipline of Popular Government: Lord Salisbury's Domestic Statecraft, 1881-1902*, (Sussex, 1978), p. 6; *The Times*, 13 April 1880; Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, p. 238.
[37] Lloyd, *The General Election of 1880*, p. 145.
[38] *The Times*, 13 April 1880.
[39] Marsh, *The Discipline of Popular Government*, p. 6.
[40] Angus Hawkins, *British Party Politics, 1852-1886*, (London, 1998), p. 210.
[41] James R. Thursfield, 'The Liberal Majority', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 42 (1880), 69-80;Marsh, *The Discipline of Popular Government*; pp. 11-12.
[42] 'Minesterial Embarassments', *Quarterly Review*, 151 (1881), 535-567; p. 541.
[43] H. R. Droop, 'On Methods of Electing Representatives', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 44 (1881), 141-202, pp. 146-161.
[44] Lloyd, *The General Election of 1880*, p. 135.
[45] The figures provided by Droop and reproduced in Lloyd's work suffer from the problems relating to multi-member constituencies explained in Appendix I. The figures shown here have been computed on the basis set out in that Appendix.

were slightly more marginal seats (defined on this basis) in 1880 the previous two general elections were also closely run.

VI Turnout

Table I/6 shows the turnout at each election analysed by principal categories of constituency.

Table I-6 Turnout at general elections

	1868	1874	1880
	Total	Total	Total
English Boroughs South			
0-1500	84.7%	87.0%	89.4%
1500-7500	81.8%	83.7%	86.0%
>7500	63.5%	58.8%	71.4%
Total English Boroughs South	70.0%	67.7%	77.8%
English Boroughs North			
0-1500	85.6%	86.3%	87.2%
1500-7500	83.7%	82.3%	85.4%
>7500	74.9%	71.9%	77.0%
Total English Boroughs North	76.8%	74.0%	78.7%
Total English Boroughs	73.5%	71.2%	77.8%
English Counties South	72.5%	71.0%	74.9%
English Counties North	77.1%	80.5%	80.2%
Total English Counties	74.8%	75.6%	77.8%
Total England	73.9%	72.2%	77.8%
Welsh Counties	78.9%	75.9%	79.8%
Welsh Boroughs	82.5%	71.5%	85.6%
Total Wales	80.9%	73.2%	82.6%
Scottish Counties	80.0%	81.5%	86.0%
Scottish Boroughs	77.1%	69.7%	80.7%
Total Scotland	77.8%	72.4%	82.2%
Great Britain	74.5%	72.3%	78.4%

Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and own calculations. See *Definitions* for the delineation of northern and southern constituencies.

In Great Britain overall turnout was relatively high in 1868 at 75%, declining in 1874 to 72% (at an election which also saw a significant increase in uncontested seats) and

climbing again to 78% in 1880. Turnover varied, perhaps unsurprisingly, according to the size of the constituency, it being much easier for the candidates and party workers to encourage, for instance, some 668 electors in Marlborough to the polls, compared to some 43,000 in Hackney. Thus, smaller boroughs with electorates of 7,500 or less tended to have higher turnouts both in the north and the south of England. It is also noticeable that in the larger boroughs and the counties turnout was nearly always higher in the north of England.

Thus, in the smaller and medium sized English boroughs turnout was consistently over 80% and varied less than in other categories of constituency over the three elections. There was not a great deal of difference between the northern and southern boroughs but larger English boroughs, those with electorates in excess of 7,500, generally had lower turnouts particularly if they were in the south. The lowest were the large London boroughs which often had turnouts of only around 55%. Turnout in Wales tended to be higher than in England, especially in the boroughs, although the largest fall in turnout in 1874 also occurred there. In Scotland turnout in the counties was higher than in the boroughs. Dyer suggested that turnout was higher in the boroughs where the Liberals held primaries and that it was higher than average in the county seats of the Borders and Clydeside. He thought this underlined 'the strength and closeness of the two-party battle in these regions'.[46]

A number of reasons can be advanced for the fall in turnover in 1874. It was, in Victorian terms, a snap election with a shorter campaigning period than in 1868 and 1880 which may well have hindered local organisations in canvassing and getting out the electorate. In addition, it was the first election under the ballot which may have deterred some electors, particularly the illiterate - although there is evidence that many electors who could not read did exercise their vote.[47] Turnout in the English counties was marginally higher in 1874 compared to 1868. Parry has suggested the Liberals lost out in the counties because of the apathy of disaffected Whigs which may be reflected more in the number of seats the Liberals left uncontested in the counties rather than turnout trends.[48]

Turnover rose again in 1880, achieving levels in excess of 1868 and 1874 in all classes of constituency and geographical areas. It is certainly true that the 1880

[46] Dyer, *Men of Property*, pp. 124-126.
[47] See Chapter II.
[48] Parry, *Democracy and religion*, p. 402.

election was expected and the parties were much better prepared than in 1874. Liberal organisation was considerably better and many registration difficulties had been ironed out.

There has been considerable historical debate over the importance of turnover statistics in the interpretation of general election results. This debate largely stems from two propositions put forward by James Cornford in relation to the general elections of 1885 to 1906. The first of these propositions was that 'the elections in which Conservatives were most successful were also those with most uncontested seats'. The second was that 'the Conservative percentage of the poll varied in inverse proportion to the size of the poll; in fact the smaller the poll the larger the Conservative share of it, and that this was most true in the constituencies where the Conservatives were most successful'.[49] Uncontested seats are discussed further in the following section of this chapter whilst this part deals with turnout and its impact, if any, on the Conservative share of the vote. Cornford's analysis went on to suggest that 'while the Conservative vote increased steadily from election to election whatever the result, the Liberal vote fluctuated sometimes by as much as ten per cent and, thus, whatever the reasons, the 'effect was not that the Conservatives were able to persuade many erstwhile Liberals to join their camp, but that the Liberals failed to put forward candidates or to get out their vote'.[50] These ideas, particularly the relationship of low turnout to Conservative victories went on to achieve a level of historical acceptance. Shannon suggested that 'tight registers and low polls were classic axioms of Conservative electioneering', whilst Green stated that 'the Conservative party hierarchy also assumed that it was essential to keep as many of those on the register from turning out on polling day'.[51] More recently these views have been challenged with historians questioning both the validity of the relationship of turnout to Conservative voting success and the degree of importance attached to these tactics in explaining Conservative manoeuvres.[52] This debate and its associated analyses have almost exclusively focussed on the five general elections from 1885 to 1906, with little attention to the three general elections from 1868. Cornford briefly considered the

[49] Cornford, 'The Adoption of Mass Organisation', p. 413.
[50] Ibid, p. 414.
[51] See Richard Shannon, *The Age of Salisbury, 1881-1902: Unionism and Empire*, (London, 1996), p. 313; E. H. H. Green, *The crisis of Conservatism: the politics, economics and ideology of the British Conservative party, 1880-1914*, (London, 1995), p. 126.
[52] See Readman, 'The 1895 General Election', pp. 487-491; Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism*, pp. 216-223.

results of these elections utilising the electoral statistics contained in Hanham.[53] His analysis suggests that the theory was not fully supported in this period except for the very largest constituencies with electorates in excess of 17,500 in 1880, where a 'distinct trend to Conservatism' can be established by the increase in the Conservative share of the vote (from 37.5% in 1868 to 44.3% in 1880) rather than the seats gained over the same period which amounted to only two. This lack of translation of the increase in the share of the vote into seats was commented on by Frisby and lead to Cornford's theory that what happened in 1885 was not a mass conversion to Conservatism but that because of redistribution 'where Conservative supporters had formerly been swamped in huge constituencies, they were now high and dry on islands of their own'.[54] However, Cornford's analysis, for this period, is based on the statistics contained in Hanham, which are in turn extracted from a contemporary article by Biddulph Martin.[55] As discussed elsewhere these statistics can give a misleading impression and Cornford's argument in respect of these elections is, as a result, potentially flawed.[56] Accordingly, Cornford's proposition has been reviewed using the statistics computed for this thesis.

There were 38 constituencies in Great Britain with an electorate in 1880 in excess of 17,500. In 1868 the Conservatives held 21 of the 82 seats available in these constituencies and in 1880 they held 24, giving a net gain of 3 seats (as compared to Cornford's two). In 1868 their share of the vote was 38.5% and in 1880 was 41.3% - an increase of 2.8% (as compared to Cornford's 6.8%). Cornford's analysis also fails to note the degree of variation within this group of constituencies and the important geographical trends it displayed. The Conservative's net gain of three seats was made up of 7 losses and 10 gains. All 7 of the losses were from seats in the north of England and 9 of the gains were in the south of England, particularly London (Surrey, East (2), Middlesex (1), Greenwich (2), Westminster (1), London (2), Tower Hamlets (1)). A key part of Cornford's argument was that the increase in the Conservative vote in these largest constituencies did not result in a commensurate increase in Conservative MPs because this larger group of Conservative supporters continued to be dominated by Liberals in larger constituencies. Hence, he argued, the redistribution of 1884/5

[53] Hanham, *Elections*, pp. 191-200, especially Table VIII and p. 92, note 2.
[54] Frisby, 'Voters not Votes'; Cornford, 'The Adoption of Mass Organisation', p. 415.
[55] Cornford, 'The Transformation Of Conservatism', pp. 57-58; Martin, 'The Elections of 1868 and 1874'.
[56] See Appendix I.

released this support so it was then 'high and dry on islands of its own'. The two major flaws in this argument seem to be that firstly, it is based on Hanham's erroneous statistics. As we have seen, the Conservative share of the vote in these constituencies increased between 1868 and 1880 by 2.8% not by the 6.8% quote by Cornford. The second issue is that his argument does not take account of the geographical shift in Conservative support. The analysis above suggests that the maintenance of elements of Conservative strength in 1880 was due to the development of support in London and the Home Counties. [57]

The application of Cornford's reasoning regarding turnout to this period as a whole produces some interesting results. He expressed the relationship between the Conservative vote and turnout in English borough constituencies for the six general elections between 1885 and 1906 by calculating the correlation coefficient of these two variables. He classified the results by taking four groups of correlation coefficients, which showed that there were a large number of English boroughs where there was a negative correlation of over 50% between the Conservative share of the vote and the level of turnout. Cornford's results are summarised in Table I/7.

Table I-7 The relationship between the Conservative share of the vote and electoral turnout - summary of Cornford's results

	Number of constituencies with correlations of			
	Less than -0.2	Between -0.2 and -0.5	Between -0.5 and -0.8	More than -0.8
Total English Boroughs	43	95	111	59
Percentage of total of 308 constituencies	14%	31%	36%	19%
Sources and notes: Readman, *The 1895 General Election*, p. 487; own calculations.				

This methodology may be applied to the period under consideration, Table I/8 shows the relationship between the Conservative share of the vote and electoral turnout in constituencies in Great Britain, in the three general elections from 1868 to 1880.

[57] See, for instance, Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism*.

Table I-8 The relationship between the Conservative share of the vote and electoral turnout in constituencies in Great Britain in the three general elections between 1868 and 1880

	Number of constituencies with correlations of			
	Less than -0.2	Between -0.2 and -0.5	Between -0.5 and -0.8	More than -0.8
English Counties South	4	3	0	4
English Boroughs South				
0-1500	15	2	1	3
1500-7500	21	3	7	9
>7500	9	1	3	2
Total	45	6	11	14
Total South	49	9	11	18
Total South %	*56.3%*	*10.3%*	*12.6%*	*20.8%*
English Counties North	2	0	3	5
English Boroughs North				
0-1500	3	2	1	1
1500-7500	9	3	4	6
>7500	7	0	4	5
Total	19	5	9	12
Total North	21	5	12	17
Total North %	*38.2%*	*9.0%*	*21.8%*	*31.0%*
Total England	70	14	23	35
Wales	4	1	3	2
Scotland	12	1	0	3
Total Great Britain	86	16	26	41
Total Great Britain %	*50.9%*	*9.5%*	*15.4%*	*24.2%*
Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and own calculations. English Boroughs are classified according to their electorate in 1874.				

It may be observed that this table provides very little support for Cornford's thesis when applied to these general elections. In over 50% of the constituencies there was little or no correlation between the Conservative share of the vote and turnout and the result is the similar in all of the classes of constituency. These results are borne out by other methods of examining the relationship of the Conservative vote to turnout. Surveys of later Victorian elections have calculated the correlation coefficient of the

change in the Conservative share of the vote and the change in turnout.[58] Taking successive pairs of elections, that is to say 1868/74 and 1874/80, there is no significant correlation at all between changes in the Conservative vote and turnout. This is true of constituencies in Great Britain as a whole and for categories of constituencies in England.

Finally, it is possible to compare the relationship of the change in the Conservative share of the vote and the change in turnout in constituencies by analysing the constituencies in which turnout rose and those in which turnout fell, and calculating the swing to or from the Conservatives in those constituencies. Plainly, if Cornford's hypothesis is correct the swing to the Conservatives should be higher in those constituencies in which turnout fell. Table I/9 shows the results of this analysis and demonstrates the opposite conclusion that the swing to the Conservatives was higher (or the swing against them was lower) in constituencies in which turnout rose rather than fell.

Table I-9 The relationship between the change in the Conservative share of the vote (electoral swing) and the change in electoral turnout in constituencies in Great Britain 1868-1880, by year

	Swing where turnout rose	Swing where turnout fell
English Counties and Boroughs		
1868 – 1874	4.93%	3.37%
1874 – 1880	-1.50%	-3.47%
Source: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and own calculations.		

The new data computed for this thesis enable a proper application of Cornford's statistical methodologies to this period. These analyses show there is very little support for the association of low turnouts with Conservative success. Although turnover did go down at the 1874 election compared to 1868 it cannot be classified as an explanatory factor for the Conservative victory.

VII Uncontested seats

Uncontested seats were a familiar feature of British electoral politics both before and after the Second Reform Act and Table I/10 summarises the number of uncontested

[58] Readman, 'The 1895 General Election', p. 488.

seats in Great Britain from 1868 to the First World War - analysing these by the party winning the seat (thus the number of Conservative wins equals the seats left uncontested by the Liberals and vice-versa).

Table I-10 Uncontested Seats in Great Britain

Year of General Election	Number of Uncontested Seats		
	Total	Conservative wins	Liberal wins
1868	145	65	80
1874	169	118	51
1880	94	54	40
1885	22	8	14
1886	155	115	40
1892	43	29	13
1895	130	119	11
1900	174	152	22
1906	34	7	27
1910 January	12	11	1
1910 December	101	72	35
Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and own calculations.			

As the table shows, the number of uncontested seats showed significant variation in elections to 1910. It is noteworthy that between 1874 and 1910 a high level of uncontested seats was, as Cornford proposed, usually associated with a Liberal defeat, except for the increase in 1910 which most probably arose from the fatigue and expense of a second general election in that year. [59] It is also readily apparent that the majority of the variation in the aggregate of uncontested seats in these elections arose from variations in the number of Liberal candidates. In other words, from 1874, the number of seats contested by the Conservatives increased except for the temporary blips in the second elections of 1885-86 and 1910 so that even in the Liberal landslide election of 1906 they contested all but 27 seats. Only in 1868, when the Conservatives failed to contest 80 seats, is it likely that the Liberals were the beneficiaries of a Conservative failure to compete for a seat when they might have had a chance of winning.

[59] Cornford, 'The Adoption of Mass Organisation', p. 413.

Table I-11 gives a more detailed analysis of the uncontested seats at the general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880, analysing them by country and, in England, by the type of constituency. The table further shows the significant variation over the three elections demonstrating the large increase in 1874 compared to 1868 and the even greater fall in 1880.[60] It also shows that uncontested seats were not just a feature of the English counties because there were also a significant number in the boroughs.

Table I-11 Uncontested seats by party taking the seat

	1868		1874		1880	
	Con	Lib	Con	Lib	Con	Lib
Boroughs						
England	9	28	13	12	4	10
Wales	-	5	-	4	-	5
Scotland	-	10	-	7	-	5
Total	9	43	13	23	4	20
Counties						
England	45	18	87	14	43	9
Wales	4	5	5	3	1	4
Scotland	3	13	6	9	-	7
Total	52	36	98	26	44	20
Universities	4	1	7	2	6	0
Grand Total	65	80	118	51	54	40
Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and own calculations.						

Table I/12 shows the numbers of uncontested seats at each of these elections compared to the total number of seats in each location and category.

[60] Hanham argues that there was a declining trend in uncontested seats over the three elections but it must be noted that this includes seats uncontested in Ireland which were significantly reduced by the changed circumstances of the intervention of Home Rule candidates in 1874 and 1880. The figures in Table I in respect of Great Britain give a clearer picture and shows that there was an increase in 1874 followed by a decline in 1880.

Table I-12 Uncontested seats as a percentage of total seats

	1868			1874			1880		
	Total Seats	UC	%	Total Seats	UC	%	Total Seats	UC	%
Boroughs									
England	281	37	*13.2*	281	25	*8.9*	281	14	*5.0*
Wales	16	5	*31.2*	16	4	*25.0*	16	5	*32.2*
Scotland	26	10	*38.8*	26	7	*26.9*	26	5	*19.2*
Total	323	52	*16.1*	323	36	*11.1*	323	24	*7.4*
Counties									
England	170	63	*37.1*	170	101	*59.4*	170	52	*30.6*
Wales	17	9	*52.9*	17	8	*47.0*	17	5	*29.4*
Scotland	32	16	*50.0*	32	15	*46.9*	32	7	*21.9*
Total	219	88	*40.2*	219	124	*56.6*	219	64	*29.2*
Universities	9	5	*55.5*	9	9	*100.0*	9	6	*66.6*
Grand Total	551	145	*26.3*	551	169	*30.7*	551	94	*17.0*
Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and own calculations. UC = uncontested.									

It can be seen that most uncontested seats were located in the English and Scottish counties. They comprised the majority of uncontested seats both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of the available seats, which proportion reached a maximum in 1874 when over 59% of the English county seats were uncontested. The English counties were a stronghold of Conservative representation and most of the uncontested seats in this category were held by them. A high proportion of the Welsh counties were also uncontested, particularly in 1868 when over 50% of the constituencies did not have a competition. The representation in uncontested Welsh county seats was relatively evenly split between the parties. Flintshire was notable in that it had no contest at any of the general elections. Lord Richard Grosvenor was elected in 1861 and held the seat for the Liberals unopposed at all subsequent elections until his resignation in 1886. In the same way that the Conservatives dominated the English counties so the Liberals held the advantage in the uncontested Scottish counties, particularly in 1868 and 1880. Six Scottish counties, all held by the Liberals, had no contests at all at the three general elections.

Although the English boroughs showed the lowest proportion of uncontested seats, there were a number which showed a strong tradition of eschewing contested elections. One, Huntingdon, remained uncontested over the three general elections and twelve others had no poll in two. There was also a degree of correlation between the

lack of contests in certain counties and the borough located within its borders. Thus, in 1868, both Huntingdon and Huntingdonshire were uncontested, Dorsetshire did not have a poll and nor did its boroughs of Bridport, Shaftesbury and Dorchester. Lincolnshire appears to have been similarly quiescent – in 1868 the county constituencies of North and Mid Lincolnshire remained uncontested as did their boroughs of Stamford, Grantham and Lincoln.

Generally, uncontested boroughs tended to have smaller electorates. Table I-13 shows the seats uncontested in the English boroughs classified according to the size of their electorates. Larger constituencies were not immune, however, for in 1868 Stoke, Huddersfield, Dudley and Wolverhampton, constituencies all having more than 11,000 voters, remained uncontested. Birmingham was not contested by the Conservatives in 1874, and in 1880 one Liberal shared Liverpool with two Conservatives.

Table I-13 Electorate in uncontested seats in English borough constituencies

	1868	1874	1880
	Seats	Seats	Seats
Electorate in 1868			
Less than 1500	17	15	9
1500-7500	12	5	3
Greater than 7500	8	5	2
Total	37	25	14
Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and own calculations.			

Unsurprisingly, given the Liberal dominance in the Welsh boroughs as a whole, all of the uncontested borough seats in Wales were held by Liberals. The most notable instance was Cardigan which was not contested at any of the elections. Given the electoral dominance of the Liberal party in the Scottish burghs it was noteworthy how many of the seats were, nevertheless, contested by the Conservatives. In 1868 and 1880 the Liberals won all of the 26 burgh seats and in 1874 the Conservatives managed to win three. Despite this lack of success the seats left uncontested by the Conservatives were only 10 in 1868, 7 in 1874 and 5 in 1880. There is no evidence, however, that the Conservatives missed any opportunities in leaving these remaining seats uncontested. In contests that did occur in these constituencies their share of the vote rarely exceeded 40% and was normally below this.

There has been little historical analysis of the reasons for parties leaving seats uncontested and the nature of political activity, if any, which took place in those constituencies which were left uncontested.[61] This is surprising since, as the paragraphs above demonstrate, they were a common feature of elections in this period, both at general elections and at by-elections (there was, for instance, for a considerable time, an agreement between the parties not to contest by-elections arising from appointment to ministerial positions).[62] The examination of the politics of uncontested seats in this period is important because the level of and changes in the number of such seats can be important indicators of other trends and factors affecting electoral politics. For example, Lloyd thought that the increase in uncontested English county seats in 1874, arising as it did from the Liberals not fielding any candidates where they had contested the seat in 1868, thus delivering 28 seats to the Conservatives without a fight, was symptomatic of the beginnings of Whig disaffection with the course of Liberalism under Gladstone although the Liberals did contest most of them again in 1880.[63]

The analysis of the reasons for parties leaving seats uncontested is complicated because their motivations included both general considerations, such as the perceived national support for a party and local factors, such as the efficiency of local party organisation. The matter is further complicated by the fact that an uncontested seat did not necessarily mean the lack of representation of a particular party; in some cases the seats in a constituency were shared between the parties. For instance, in the English counties in 1868 10 of the 30 uncontested constituencies were shared in this way. Perhaps the first question to ask in these circumstances is whether the failure to contest a seat was really a potential loss to the party in question; in other words, to consider whether the party failing to put up a candidate had any realistic chance of winning the seat. If it turns out that the party failing to put up a candidate had very little chance, a new set of questions arise, such as why the Conservatives consistently decided to fight seemingly ‘hopeless’ contests, whereas the Liberal approach varied from election to election. Following from this the final question is what kind of political activity took place in constituencies which had no contest.

[61] Lloyd, 'Uncontested Seats'; D. Foster, 'The Politics of Uncontested Elections: North Lancashire, 1832-1865', *Northern History*, 13 (1977), 232-247; Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*.
[62] See Angus Hawkins, 'Government Appointment By-Elections: 1832-1886', in Thomas Otte and Paul Readman (eds), *By-elections in British Politics, 1832-1914*, (Woodbridge, 2013), 77-98. See also Chapter V.
[63] Lloyd, 'Uncontested Seats'.

One way of assessing whether a candidate had a chance of winning is to look at what might have happened had there been a contested election. Such counterfactual questions are always risky but they can be helpful in directing attention to the likely factors leading to the lack of a contest. If one party had very little chance of winning a seat it is understandable that it would be difficult to find candidates willing to carry the cost and difficulty of a campaign in hopeless circumstances. However, if one party did seem to have a reasonable prospect the lack of a contest might point to other factors. There might have been a lack of, or a significant decline, in local party organisation resulting in local party agents underestimating the likely level of local support. It might also indicate where political elites in a constituency had decided on an uncontested election without regard to the possible outcome. One way of considering whether a party had a realistic chance of winning a contest is to compare the result of a contested election in the constituency concerned with the representation at an uncontested election and to review the share of the vote achieved by the respective parties as an indicator of the relative levels of support in the constituency. This is, of course, not possible for the 17 constituencies in Great Britain where there was no contest at any of the three general elections under consideration, but there are, nevertheless, 121 other constituencies where there was at least one uncontested election or at least one contested poll. An analysis of these constituencies shows that, on the whole, there were few occasions where the representation in an uncontested year was different from that resulting from a poll at a different election – suggesting that, generally speaking, the other party had made a rational decision in not contesting the seat. There were, however, 28 constituencies where the party not contesting the constituency did appear to have a chance of winning and which provide some interesting examples of the parties' reasons for their decision.

Some of the failures to contest seemingly winnable seats can be attributed to lack of party organisation, financial concerns and local support. For instance, Northamptonshire North had been held in 1868 and 1874 by two Conservatives without a contest. However, in 1880 the Liberals put up a single candidate against two Conservatives. The single candidate strategy was spectacularly successful with Bobby Spencer (the younger brother of Earl Spencer) coming top of the poll with 50.7% of the vote in close run contest. Hanham attributed the revitalisation of the Liberals in Northamptonshire to the release of the Whigs from government responsibilities after the change in government after the 1874 general election so that Earl Spencer was able

to return to a full time commitment to the county.[64] Lincolnshire North was uncontested in 1868 and the representation shared by agreement between the parties. After that election the Liberal member, Sir Montagu Cholmely, indicated a wish to retire but little was done to find a successor and when he died shortly before the 1874 election a Liberal organisation which had fallen into disarray was unable to find a replacement. Olney thought that the Conservative walk-over was a result of 'the abdication by the whig party of the north division'.[65]

Local factors could play their part in the decision to leave a seat uncontested. Bedfordshire was uncontested in 1868 and 1874 returning a Liberal and a Conservative, on both occasions. The Liberal seat usually went to a member of the family of the Duke of Bedford or his nominee and the Conservative interest had been represented by Sir Richard Gilpin since 1851. In a break from local influence, however, in 1880 the Bedfordshire Liberal Association decided to run a second candidate and selected James Howard, the founder of the Farmers' Alliance.[66] On receiving this news Gilpin stood down and the two Liberals coasted home capturing 55% of the vote, suggesting perhaps that a good deal of the Conservative vote was a result of 'political capital' attaching to Gilpin personally.

Another set of questions and explanations centre around the role of the parties in relation to uncontested seats. This question is particularly vital to the period 1868 to 1880 because the transition to national party politics and the reduction of local influence does not necessarily lead to the reduction of uncontested seats. We have seen that Salisbury noted that had the party known the size of the defeat that they were facing in 1880 they might have focussed their resources more, whereas the Conservatives contested more seats at each successive general election in the period.[67] Similarly, as noted above, it is tempting to attribute the Liberal party's failure to contest large numbers of seats in a period when historians might say party politics had reached ascendancy, to collapses in its organisation and its electoral unpopularity. The question of the correlation between uncontested seats and the persistence of strong local party influences particularly in the candidate selection process is important for this period. Carty suggested that in Ireland 'the occurrence of uncontested seats at

[64] Hanham, *Elections*, p. 28.
[65] R. J. Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics, 1832-85*, (Oxford, 1973), pp. 176-181.
[66] *Manchester Times*, 20 March 1880.
[67] Salisbury to Beaconsfield, 7 April 1880, Salisbury Papers, quoted in Lloyd, 'Uncontested Seats', p. 265.

general elections can be seen as indicating the persistence of a strong local component in candidate selection procedures'.[68] The question of party organisation is also important in the estimation of the relative electoral strengths of the parties and candidates since this is usually crucially dependent on the canvass of local electors.

Political science studies can provide valuable insights into the incidence and causes of uncontested seats in different electoral systems. Coats and Dalton have undertaken a survey dealing with 1,344 constituency elections at British Parliamentary general elections from 1852 to 1880.[69] They suggest that in those elections from 1852 to 1880 there were powerful barriers to entry which prevented opposition parties from contesting certain constituencies. They seek to explain these barriers by the importance of incumbency, the advantage of which is further explained by the power of what they term 'brand name capital'. How well known a candidate was is seen to depend on a number of elements including a deference factor and the influence of local magnates in pocket boroughs and not least in the cost of new candidates making themselves known to voters. These costs are considered to be much higher in county constituencies because of their size and the wider distribution of the electors and as a result the barriers to entry are found to be significantly more powerful in county constituencies as compared to boroughs. As is discussed further below the cost of British parliamentary elections was significant, was much higher in the counties than the boroughs and was generally the personal responsibility of the candidate, who, of course, received no remuneration as a member of parliament.

Thus, cost was another factor that may have deterred candidates, especially where support was evenly divided between the parties. Northumberland South had been uncontested in 1868 and 1874 when the parties agreed to share the representation. In 1880 two Liberals decided to contest the election against a single Conservative. They were both elected but the contest was close run with the Liberals winning 51% of the vote. The losing Conservative spent £6,600, more than double the average county

[68] R. K. Carty, 'From Tradition to Modernity, and Back Again: Party Building in Ireland ', in Ronald J. Hill and Michael Marsh (eds), *Modern Irish Democracy: Essays in Honour of Basil Chubb*, (Dublin, 1993), 24-43.

[69] R. Morris Coats and Thomas R. Dalton, 'Entry Barriers in Politics and Uncontested Elections', *Journal of Public Economics*, 49 (1992), 75-90. Coats and Dalton's sample uses British parliamentary general elections from 1852 to 1880 based on Craig (Craig, *Election Results*).They use a stratified sample of roughly 60 per cent of the English boroughs and counties, Scottish boroughs and counties, and Welsh boroughs and counties that were enfranchised in 1832 but excluding the Universities. By examining these years, they determine whether candidates have previously campaigned or gained office, or whether other family members have held office in the previous twenty years or so. The sample comprises 1,344 constituency elections at general elections and 38.9 per cent were uncontested.

cost, perhaps demonstrating why there had been a lack of enthusiasm to contest the seat before.[70] A contemporary writer in 1868 aptly summarised the attitude of some candidates when he wrote:

> The claims of the Irish Church may be very strong, but they give place, as we have before remarked, to considerations of family convenience. Country gentlemen have a pious horror of costly electoral contests.[71]

There were no legal restrictions on the absolute amount of a candidate's expenditure, although some forms of outlay were illegal. A notorious example was the provision of conveyances to take voters to the polls, which was a prohibition ignored more often than it was enforced, until it was temporarily made legal immediately prior to the 1880 general election, only to be outlawed again in 1883. The increasing cost of elections was of mounting concern during the period from 1868 to 1880 and the cost of the 1880 general election was undoubtedly a significant factor in prompting the 1883 Corrupt Practices Act.

The average costs incurred in contested elections as declared in candidates' returns are shown in Table I/14.[72]

Table I-14 Average expenditure for each candidate

	1868 £	1874 £	1880 £
Counties	11911	10392	8955
Boroughs	3070	2382	3166
Sources and notes: Source: *PP*, Election Expenses (424) (1868-69); *PP*, Election Charges (358) (1874), *PP*, Election Charges (382) (1880). The actual cost of the 1880 general election was much higher when the cost of conveyances was included. Their cost has been excluded above to make the 1880 figures comparable with 1868 and 1874 when conveyancing was technically illegal and, even if it did occur, would not have been included in the returns of expenses.			

It can be seen that the average cost of an election was not inconsiderable and, of course, could be much higher than these averages. It can also be seen that the cost of county contests was also much higher than boroughs not least due to the much greater

[70] *PP*, 1880, Election charges, (382), p.6.
[71] *Leeds Mercury*, 3 October 1868.
[72] Candidates were required to make returns of their expenditure and it was generally understood that these understated the actual amounts involved; however, the figures involved give a general indication of the amounts and trends. This matter is discussed further in Chapter II.

geographical size of the constituencies which, as we have seen, helps explain why more county seats were uncontested than boroughs.[73]

Jaggard thought that the lack of contested constituencies in Cornwall up to 1868 at least 'was probably … an acknowledgement by the respective parties that it was pointless wasting money in Launceston, St Ives or Liskeard'.[74] The minority clause of the 1867 Reform Act produced different reactions in a number of three member constituencies. Oxfordshire had a long history of uncontested elections. Only two general elections were contested between 1832 and 1880 and one of those, in 1852, only resulted in a poll because there were four Conservative candidates. In 1865 three Conservatives had been returned unopposed, however, in 1868, at a meeting of friends of the Conservative cause 'numerously and influentially attended by landowners, occupiers and others', it was decided that:

> Inasmuch as the number of votes to be given to each constituent was reduced by the Reform Act from three to two, it was decided to request Mr Henley and Colonel North only, as the senior members to offer themselves for re-election.[75]

The Liberal Committee, which had clearly fortuitously been meeting at the same time a few streets away, was then consulted and the record of their meeting shows that:

> It was agreed that in consequence of the decision arrived at by the Conservative Party, the Liberals would bring forward one candidate [Mr Cornwallis Cartwright], and thus avoid a contest.[76]

This arrangement did not prevent the candidates issuing addresses; indeed, that of Cartwright, the Liberal, went into considerable detail on a number of policy issues. The arrangement was maintained for the subsequent elections in 1874 and 1880 and the candidates continued to issue addresses at these elections. There are no reports in Oxfordshire of the candidates having given any speeches or having held any meetings in the period before their nomination and election. The nomination in 1868 was described as a quiet affair at which in a hall the body of which 'was not half filled' and the 'Liberal candidate, occupied a place on the hustings, but appeared to be almost unknown'.[77] Liberal organisation was so well developed that it was able to overcome the impact of the minority clause in Birmingham in 1868 securing the return of three

[73] County constituencies did not have much larger electorates than the larger boroughs so the physical size of the constituency and the consequently greater dispersal of the electorate was the important factor.
[74] Edwin Jaggard, *Cornwall Politics in the Age of Reform, 1790-1885*, (Woodbridge, 1999), p. 157.
[75] *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 22 August 1868.
[76] Ibid, 22 August 1868.
[77] Ibid, 21 November 1868.

Liberals organising voting for candidates separately by wards so that Liberal votes were evenly distributed. After this resounding victory for the Liberal party caucus the Conservatives did not contest the 1874 election.

Carty suggested that the impact of electoral reform in Irish constituencies was to increase the number of contested seats, taking the view that this was not surprising since:

> Changes in the rules of the electoral game disrupt well-established patterns of behaviour and increase uncertainty, conditions most conducive to political entrepreneurs seeking to establish new organisations and create new party politics.[78]

There is, however, little evidence to support this view in the British context (it should be remembered that changes in the Irish franchise were not connected with changes in the English franchise). The general elections between 1868 and 1914 did not consistently comply with this pattern. The general election of 1868, the first after the 1867 Reform Act, produced a relatively high number of uncontested seats, and the 1874 election, after the Ballot Act of 1872, produced the highest number of uncontested seats of the period. The 1885 general election, after the third reform act, conversely produced one of the lowest proportions of uncontested seats. Similarly, the very low levels of uncontested seats in 1892 and 1896 cannot be associated with any change in the electoral system.

The degree of electoral political activity in uncontested seats in this period has not been investigated in any depth. Political activity for these purposes has been considered as what might be regarded as normal activities in a contested election such as canvassing, issuing election addresses, holding rallies and meetings, and making speeches. It could also include less structured political activity at election times such as debates in the local press, through editorials and correspondence, vigorous debate at the hustings and pamphleteering. Some studies have sought to demonstrate that there was significant activity despite the lack of an electoral contest. An example is North Lancashire where Foster sought to show that there could be political activity in uncontested constituencies.[79] However, the politics he describes are the debates of local magnates and party activists seeking to avoid expensive election contests rather than any wider political activity. Political activity in a broad sense did not have to involve simply electoral contests between the Liberals and Conservatives. The

[78] Carty, 'From Tradition to Modernity', pp. 24–43.
[79] Foster, 'The Politics of Uncontested Elections', p. 232.

Conservatives failed to contest Wolverhampton between 1837 and 1861 and again in 1868. This was hardly surprising given the derisory number of votes their candidate received in 1865, and they only fielded a token single candidate in 1874 and 1880 (who was soundly beaten). However, as Lawrence remarks in his detailed study of Wolverhampton, there was a good deal of political activity between wings of the Liberal party although it is not clear whether these sorts of debate were as inclusive as contested election debates or whether they remained confined to the smaller ranks of party activists.[80]

Such other evidence as can be ascertained suggests that there was little political activity in uncontested seats. Cornwall West represented the most extreme example of an uncontested constituency, having returned two Liberal members unopposed at every general election from 1832 to 1880. Despite this dominance there was, as Edwin Jaggard has described, little complacency in the Liberal party organisation when in 1868 it had to respond to the twin challenges of a new candidate from outside the county and the increase in the electorate, which as a result of the new county franchise had increased from 4,000 in 1866 to 8,500 in 1868.[81] This showed the strength of the Liberal organisation in the county and its activity in voter registration such that its own estimates of its supporters showed a healthy Liberal majority. It appears that the Conservative organisation was to all intents non-existent and the constituency was conceded in all three general elections between 1868 and 1880, although whether this was simply by default or through a conscious policy decision is not clear. Apart from the Liberal organisational activity on registration there is little evidence of other political activity.

In order to gauge the degree and nature of electoral political activity in uncontested constituencies in a more systematic way a sample of such constituencies was selected. This selection included counties and boroughs in both the north and south of England together with constituencies which were not contested at all at any of the three elections or were contested once or twice, so as to give coverage of a range of different constituencies.[82] The assessment of the degree of political activity has been made through the means of review of local newspapers. This review sought to

[80] Lawrence, *Speaking*, pp. 73 -98.
[81] Jaggard, *Cornwall Politics*, pp. 183-187; Craig, *Election Results*.
[82] The constituencies were Cornwall, West; Sussex, West; Hampshire, North; Cheshire, West; Lincolnshire, Mid; Lincolnshire, North; Nottinghamshire, North; Huntingdon, Retford, Tavistock; Liverpool and Wolverhampton.

determine the constituency was uncontested because of the late withdrawal of a candidate or whether there was no contested campaign at all. In addition, these sources were reviewed to determine if candidates issued election addresses and held political meetings or whether there was any other evidence of public participation in political debate during the campaign period, which was considered to be the four weeks prior to the date of nomination (or the 25 January for 1874, the election of that year having been called at short notice).

The general conclusions of this survey were that there was very little, if any, political activity, in the sense described above, in uncontested constituencies. Sometimes a candidate for the other party was mooted or appeared only to drop out at the last minute before nomination but these appearances were generally short-lived and did not generate any activity. A good example of this was Wolverhampton in 1868. A Conservative candidate came forward at the last minute but withdrew on nomination day and as Lawrence remarked in his study of the constituency's politics it was not surprising the Conservatives did not contest the elections as they had 'neither the organisation nor the money to do so', in fact, the only political activity was one address by the Liberal candidates.[83]

In three southern English counties which were not contested at all at any of the three general elections there is no evidence of any political activity. The candidates do not appear to have issued any addresses or to have held any political meetings. It is perhaps relevant that the stability of representation was marked. In two of the constituencies the same members represented the county for all three elections and in the other there was only one change in 1874. There was a little more public activity at the 1868 general election when, prior to the Ballot Act of 1872, nominations were still made in public. Although, in the absence of any opposition the ceremonies were brief confirming the unopposed candidates as the members for the constituencies. The new MPs often made speeches and there was some attendance by the public.

Uncontested seats were most commonly found in the counties, which was probably due to the cost of county contests (sometimes three times more than in a borough) together with the dominance of Conservative strength which made contests unattractive to potential Liberal candidates. There was a considerable variation in the policies of the parties towards uncontested seats. After 1868 the Conservatives

[83] Lawrence, *Speaking*, p. 87 and p. 88, footnote 54; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 16 November 1868, p. 5.

generally contested more seats at each successive general election whilst the number of seats contested by the Liberals could vary significantly from one general election to another. It is difficult to tell if this was driven by a different attitude to contests or otherwise. The nationalisation of politics may well have produced a decision by the Conservatives that as many seats as possible should be contested in order to spread the Conservative message. However, this did not seem to be a view shared by the Liberals. Equally, the type of seat where the Conservatives were electorally weakest, the boroughs, offered better chances and lower cost than the position faced by the Liberals in hopeless county constituencies.

VIII Non-concurrence of polling dates in late Victorian and Edwardian general elections: The case of the 1874 general election

Under the relevant Victorian legislation polls were held over a period of time following the dissolution of Parliament. For the three general elections in the period this varied between 13 and 26 days. The purpose of this section is to consider whether voters polling in later contests appear to have been influenced by earlier results. It was not until the 1918 Representation of the People Act amended the arrangements for elections that all polls at general elections in Britain were held on the same day. Under the relevant Victorian election legislation, writs were issued to the county sheriffs and borough returning officers when the announcement of a dissolution was made.[84] These were generally received one or two days afterwards and in the counties the election day had to be fixed within two days of the receipt of the writ for a date not more than nine days after its receipt and if a poll was required that was to be held within six days of the election date. This gave a maximum period of 17 days (not including Sundays) before the last possible county polling date.[85] After the receipt of the writ in the boroughs the returning officer was required to fix an election date not more than four days after the receipt of the writ and a polling date not later than three days after the election date; a maximum of seven days after the receipt of the writ.[86] In practice, however, the period between receipt of the writ and polling for the majority of constituencies was much shorter, particularly in 1868 and 1880 when the campaigns had been anticipated and there was a desire to get on with the process.

[84] In the period these dates were: Wednesday 11 November 1868; Monday 26 January, 1874; Wednesday 24 March 1880.
[85] These were generally: Thursday December 3, 1868; Friday 13 February, 1874; 14 April, 1880.
[86] *The Times*, January 26, 1874.

The statutory timetables for the 1868, 1874 and 1880 general elections were not wholly dissimilar, although the 1874 election was shorter. In 1868 Parliament was dissolved on 11 November and the last contest held on December 7, a maximum campaign period of 26 days. The 1874 timetable was slightly shorter giving a maximum campaign period of 21 days. In addition, the dissolutions of 1868 and 1880 had been generally anticipated whereas this was not the case in 1874, when the existing Parliament could have run to October 1875. The Liberals, despite by-election losses, still had a working majority and Gladstone's decision was a genuine surprise. A timetable which gave a maximum of 13 days from the announcement of the dissolution to a poll in the boroughs was bound to put a premium on party preparedness and organisation and allowed little time for public debate and development of issues, let alone the canvassing of support. As *The Times* opined 'there is good ground for believing that many candidates and constituencies will be found unprepared'.[87] In 1880 the dissolution was on 24 March and the last contest held on April 27, a campaign period of 33 days.[88]

One of the reasons often advanced for the introduction of simultaneous polling is the concern that the declaration of one poll before another has taken place may in some way affect the voting behaviour of electors at the subsequent polls, either in adverse impact, or in a band-wagoning effect. This section presents a preliminary analysis of the declaration of results for the 1874 General Election and seeks to draw some conclusions showing that there was little, in any, band-wagoning as a result of early Conservative victories.

The following table shows an overall analysis of the dates of the declaration of polls.

[87] Ibid, 26 January 1874.
[88] Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher, *British Electoral Facts*, pp. 120-121; the dates of the latest poll exclude the Universities and Orkney and Shetland since they usually polled after the other constituencies had concluded.

Table I-15 Poll declarations at the 1874 general election

Declaration Date	All constituencies	Constituencies where the Conservatives gained one or more seats	Conservative gains as a %	Cumulative total of all constituencies	Cumulative total % of all constituencies	Cumulative total of Conservative gains	Cumulative total % of Conservative gains
January							
30 to31	25	1	4.0%	25	6.0%	1	1.0%
February							
2	21	5	23.8%	46	11.1%	6	6.0%
3	46	13	28.3%	92	22.1%	19	19.0%
4	37	10	27.0%	129	31.0%	29	29.0%
5	64	25	39.1%	193	46.4%	54	54.0%
6	31	12	38.7%	224	53.8%	66	66.0%
7	39	9	23.1%	263	63.2%	75	75.0%
9	31	4	12.9%	294	70.7%	79	79.0%
10	18	5	27.8%	312	75.0%	84	84.0%
11	12	3	25.0%	324	77.9%	87	87.0%
12	15	1	6.7%	339	81.5%	88	88.0%
13	22	1	4.5%	361	86.8%	89	89.0%
14 to 19	44	11	25.0%	405	97.4%	100	100.0%
Others	11	0	0.0%	416	100.0%	100	100.0%
	416	100	24.0%				

Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832*-1885; Stenton, *McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book British Election Results 1832-1918* Eighth Edition and own calculations. Notes: 'Others' refer to constituencies where the exact declaration date is not known. Declaration dates are the date of nomination and declaration in the case of uncontested seats and the poll date for contested seats.

The table shows the declaration date and the number of constituencies declaring on that day. The next column shows the number of constituencies where the Conservatives gained one or more seats and the following column these gains as a percentage of the constituencies reporting. The remaining columns show the cumulative totals of Conservative gains and total constituencies declaring both in absolute terms and as cumulative percentages. The table throws into relief the shortness of the 1874 election timetable. The dissolution was announced on Saturday 25th January and, as will be observed, by 7th February 63% of the constituencies had declared and the Conservatives had made 75% of their gains. The election was effectively over within 13 days of its announcement and the Conservative victory was known - the only remaining question was the size of the new administration's majority. The statistics also show that the Conservatives tended to make their gains early in the contest, their cumulative gains running ahead of the cumulative declarations until late

in the timetable, suggesting, prima facie, that there was little if any band-wagoning and that some early victories did not cause a switch of support to bring a late surge in Conservative gains. Equally, there does not seem to have been any opposite reaction with a swing of support to the Liberals later in the campaign.

Chapter II The Ballot Act, corruption, violence and expenses

I Introduction

The question of secret voting had long been debated in British politics before 1872, particularly since the 1830s and 1840s.[1] This debate reached its conclusion when the Ballot Act received royal assent on 18 July 1872 ending a troubled development which had taken two sessions of Parliament and a confrontation between Lords and Commons in order to complete its passage. [2] The Act applied to both parliamentary and municipal elections and made radical amendments to their operation which had a significant and continuing impact on the nature and conduct of electoral politics in Britain. It brought two principal changes in electoral methodology. Firstly, it changed the procedure for the nomination of candidates, requiring nomination in writing; a procedure which replaced the ancient system of public nomination and meant that prospective candidates would no longer be required to mount the hustings and face the public during the nomination process.[3]

Secondly, and most importantly, it required the use of a secret ballot system for the conduct of any poll. The Act specified at great length the procedures to be used in the conduct of the ballot and the nature and form of the documentation to be used. Controversially, it required a method whereby each ballot paper was numbered with a like numbered counterfoil against which was recorded the identity of the voter, so that scrutiny and the consequent identification of the ballot paper of an identified voter, could be made by order of the court. This led to resistance by elements of the Liberal party and occasional subsequent intimidation of voters by suggestion that because of the counterfoil system the vote was not really secret.[4]

There is remarkably little in the parliamentary debates or in the deliberations of the principal actors, during the period leading up to the passing of the Act, which suggests any party political advantages or disadvantages which might have been

[1] Seymour, *Electoral Reform*, p. 204.
[2] *The Ballot Act 1872*, 35 & 36 Vict. Cap. 33.
[3] Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, p. 45.
[4] See Bruce L. Kinzer, *The Ballot Question in Nineteenth-Century English Politics*, (New York, 1978).

expected to arise from the passage of the legislation. In fact, the most frequently voiced concerns that secret voting would have significant electoral consequences were made in relation to Ireland. In an 1872 speech to the Lords, Salisbury expressed his concern that secret voting would 'destroy the moral influence exercised by the educated classes in Ireland and result in the election of a substantial body of Irish representatives whose ultimate goal would be the separation of Ireland from the United Kingdom'.[5] He was right that secret voting became associated with political change in Ireland. Whilst calls for separation were to grow even more by 1880, Isaac Butt's Home government Association had already achieved by-election success by the time of the 1874 general election when Home Rule candidates virtually eliminated the Irish Liberal representation with the Liberals losing 53 of their 64 seats and the Home Rulers returning 59 MPs compared to a single member in the previous parliament.

Although Ireland provided a seemingly clear example of one of the consequences of the Act, its effects and implications for British electoral politics are less clear and have not been subject to detailed historical scrutiny. Whilst there have been a number of works dealing with the Ballot they have devoted most focus to the parliamentary politics of the development and passage of the legislation.[6] Despite this difficulty and the apparent lack of scrutiny, historians have, nevertheless, proposed various assessments of the Act's impact. For Seymour the Act undoubtedly reduced or eliminated 'the factor of violence in elections'.[7] He validly observes that contemporary predictions of problems with illiterate voters and personation turned out to be 'trifling' or 'non-existent'.[8] The impact of the Act on the amount of corruption or illegitimate influence over electors was, however, much more difficult to evaluate, both in terms of definition and of assessment. Seymour thought such influence was mitigated by the Act, observing the lack of any successful petition for intimidation after 1872 but nevertheless thought that 'borough electors had not been liberated from pressure exercised by employers and fellow workmen', and 'county voters followed the orders of the landed aristocracy in 1874 and 1880 as implicitly as they did in 1868'.[9]

[5] *Hansard*, 3rd ser., ccxi,1872,1421-1504; Salisbury at 1498.
[6] For example: Kinzer, *The Ballot Question*.
[7] Seymour, *Electoral Reform*, p. 432.
[8] Ibid, p. 432.
[9] Ibid, p. 433.

Bruce Kinzer thought the Act did little to change the incidence of bribery and treating but produced 'greater order and respectability'.[10] His assessment of the impact of the Act on undue influence as opposed to corruption is more optimistic, concluding that it dealt 'a severe blow' to its exercise, although he supplies very little in the way of argument or evidence to support this conclusion.[11] Hanham concluded the immediate effect of the Act was to 'suppress undue influence, not to put down bribery'.[12] However, he suggests it did contribute to the fight against corruption by enabling reformers to argue that, for the first time, bribery did not pay. Also he thought the extension of the parliamentary law to municipal elections helped to 'strike at the root of corruption'.[13] Martin Pugh agreed that the impact of the Act was 'apparently slight', but argues this provides no evidence that undue influence did not exist, nor of its elimination by the Act. He notes the means that may have been used to undermine rural electors' confidence in the secrecy of the ballot and argues for the continued power of deference in the polling booth.[14] Cornelius O'Leary said:

> It is hard to see just how some of the effects which are attributed to it can be proved. Undue influence, violence and intimidation figured much less in later elections, and the substitution of the polling-booth for the hustings made the casting of the vote seem more of a deliberate political act and less of a social occasion.[15]

However, 'the offences of bribery and corruption continued in a slightly different form in spite of it' and the Act's main effect was to 'strike at yet another form of influence and privilege – the rule of wealthy landlords and factory owners over the political consciences of their tenants and workmen'.[16]

Vernon and, subsequently, Lawrence proposed a different analysis, suggesting that the Act, especially the elimination of public nomination and the introduction of polling booths from which the public were excluded, were important steps in the restriction of public participation in electoral politics.[17] Vernon saw aspects of electoral legislation as the progressive reduction of democracy in English politics by

[10] Kinzer, *The Ballot Question*, p. 245.
[11] Ibid, p. 245.
[12] Hanham, *Elections*, p. 274.
[13] Ibid, p. 275.
[14] Martin Pugh, *The making of modern British politics, 1867-1945*, 3rd, (Oxford, 2002), 3rd. edn., pp. 11-12.
[15] Cornelius O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices in British Elections*, (Oxford, 1962), p. 86.
[16] Ibid, pp. 86-87.
[17] Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, pp. 45-48; Vernon, *Politics*, pp. 157-158.

such restrictions.[18] Lawrence has argued that the loss of the hustings 'abolished a vital bastion of public accountability and pushed candidate selection into the arms of the political parties'.[19]

It is apparent, therefore, that there have been a number of different, and often conflicting, views on the impact of the Act. One common factor, however, in these assessments is the lack of systematic evidence from which they draw their conclusions. This problem arises from two sources. Firstly, there is, as already noted, the difficulty of assessing the impact of a single piece of legislation in a dynamic political environment. Secondly, the nature of the evidence used is usually anecdotal and often presented in an unsystematic form. Much of this evidence is drawn from newspaper reports and the minutes of evidence for a number of parliamentary select committees, particularly the Hartington committee which reported in 1871 and the 1876 committee on Parliamentary and Municipal Elections, chaired by Sir Charles Dilke.[20] Both of these committees heard evidence from a number of witnesses and their testimony provides valuable relevant material. However, the basis of selection of witnesses by the committees is not known and is not obviously designed to obtain coverage of a significant number of constituencies. Examples are given by selective quotation to draw more general conclusions, rather than by a systematic assessment of all of the evidence available.

This chapter provides a different assessment of the impact of the Act by using more systematic assessments of the evidence. It does this by considering a number of different forms of evidential matters such as election petitions presented between 1868 and 1880, the totality of relevant testimony presented to select committees and to trials of election petitions; election results at national, regional and constituency level and a systematic survey of reports of electoral violence in the period 1868-1880. The chapter is organised, first to consider the implications of the overall results of the 1874 general election, then to consider the impact of the Act on each of the areas of electoral violence, bribery and the application of undue influence. The final section considers

[18] Vernon, *Politics*, p. 158.
[19] Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, p. 47.
[20] *PP*, 1868-69, Report from the Select Committee on Parliamentary and Municipal Elections; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix [Hartington Evidence], (352) (352-I); *PP*, 1870, Report from the Select Committee on Parliamentary and Municipal Elections; with the proceedings of the committee, and an appendix [Hartington Report], (115); *PP*, 1876, Report from the Select Committee on Parliamentary and Municipal Elections; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix, (162), para.400 p.26.

some of the Act's broader implications particularly with regard to the restriction of public participation in politics and seeks to draw some overall conclusions. As a preliminary, however, it considers whether there were dramatic and obvious changes to the pattern of election results which could be attributed to the introduction of the legislation particularly in the results of by-elections between the introduction of the legislation in July 1872 and the general election of 1874 as well as the results of that general election itself.

II By-elections and the general election of 1874

The first poll using the secret ballot took place on 17 August 1872 at Pontefract. The constituency returned two members and in 1868 had returned a Liberal, H. C. E. Childers, and a Conservative, Samuel Waterhouse. Childers had a majority of 13 over Waterhouse and a second Liberal candidate was unelected in third place. Childers' ministerial appointment as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in 1872 prompted a by-election which was contested by Viscount Pollington for the Conservatives. Childers retained his seat with a less than dramatic swing to the Liberals and the polling remained as tight as it had been in 1868 (and in previous elections).[21] *The Times* reported how this first poll using the ballot was 'characterised by remarkable tranquillity'. The paper's reporter described the election day using such phrases as: 'throughout the borough a strange and unwonted quietude reigns'; 'no bands of music paraded the town'; 'no colours or banners were seen in procession;' and 'the church bells were silent'.[22]

Thus, at its first outing, the ballot seemed to have had no dramatic impact on the electoral result and a calming effect on the electoral environment. This lack of any major impact on electoral results is borne out by comparing the results of by-elections immediately before and after the Act. This is a useful test because over a short period of time such as this other factors are most likely to remain relatively constant, allowing any effects of the legislation to show through more clearly. There were 35 by-elections between 18 July 1872 and the 1874 general election and 26 of these were contested, giving some reasonable experience of the operation of the ballot prior to its full scale

[21] See also Appendix I.
[22] *The Times*, 16 August 1872.

test in a general election, and Table II/1 shows the gains, losses and swings in by-elections in each year for the 18 months before and after the passage of the Act.[23]

Table II-1 By-elections in Britain held before and after the Ballot Act from 1 January 1870 to 31 January 1874

By Elections held from 1st January 1870 to 18th July 1872				
Year	Contests	Conservative Gains	Liberal Gains	Swing to(from) Conservatives[24]
1870	22	5	2	6.3%
1871	18	4	1	(0.3)%
1872 – pre Ballot Act	11	4	0	1.2%
By Elections held from 19th July 1872 to 31st January 1874				
1872 – post Ballot Act	7	0	0	(1.2)%
1873	25	9	0	4.4%
Sources and notes: Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results*; own calculations.				

These results clearly show that the trend of Conservative gains which had been apparent before 1872, continued into 1873 and was confirmed in Disraeli's victory in 1874 and although there was a slight saving against the Conservatives in the 1872 contests the tide flowed strongly back in their favour in 1873, continuing the overall trend since 1868.

Similarly, the results of the 1874 General Election did not show any dramatic changes. If Conservative landowners and Liberal and Conservative factory owners had previously exerted significant influence, and this influence had been modified by the introduction of secret voting, then some significant changes in voting patterns might have been expected in the 1874 general election. Similarly, many supporters of secret voting had thought it was the solution to bribery and, thus, if bribery had been that extensive and secret voting had been the panacea then some disturbance in electoral results might have been expected. However, the results seemed relatively consistent across the country. As Chapter I demonstrated there was a swing to the Conservatives in nearly all parts of England, Scotland and Wales; only in the smaller northern English boroughs did the Liberals hold their own. The Conservatives extended their

[23] By-elections are considered in more detail in Chapter V.
[24] Swings have been calculated on a weighted average basis. See Appendix I on the methods of calculating electoral swing.

grip on the English county seats particularly in the south, but generally speaking the swing to the Conservatives was remarkably consistent across Britain.

It might be argued that the incidence of undue influence and bribery may have been localised and less extensive, so that its elimination, if such was the case, would be lost in overall national statistics. To test this, it is useful to examine the results of those constituencies which went against the trend, displaying a swing to the Liberals contrary to the national and regional trend of a swing to the Conservatives. Table II/2 shows the constituencies showing the largest swings against the Conservatives.

Table II-2 Constituencies displaying large swings against the Conservatives at the 1874 general election

Bridgnorth	-24.3%
Droitwich	-23.0%
Weymouth	-22.9%
Boston	-18.9%
Hartlepool	-12.5%
Sources and notes: Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results*; own calculations.	

These results offer no conclusive evidence for or against the impact of the ballot, often giving contradictory pointers to its possible impact. Bridgnorth appears to provide a remarkable example of the continuation of patronage despite the introduction of the ballot. The borough was dominated by the Apley estate and its owners, the Whitmore family, had long provided Conservative members for the constituency. After 1868 the estate was sold to the Fosters who were Liberals and W. H. Foster achieved a Liberal victory in 1874 against the Conservative tide in the rest of the country.[25] Similarly, Droitwich appears to provide evidence of patronage continuing under the ballot. The seat had consistently returned, as Conservatives, members of the Pakington family, whose family seat was located in the borough. The rapid expansion of the local salt works in the 1860s and the enfranchisement of many of its workers under the 1867 Act enabled its owners, the Corbetts, to sustain a successful Liberal challenge in 1874, which carried through to 1880.[26] If these two constituencies suggest that influence may well have continued to be important, Hartlepool on the other hand seems to give contrary evidence. The local magnate, Ralph W. Jackson, had held the seat with a

[25] Hanham, *Elections*, p. 48.
[26] Ibid, pp. 48-49.

majority of three in 1868 but was swept away in 1874 by a Liberal majority of 918, suggesting that his electoral influence had been significantly diminished.[27]

Weymouth had been the subject of a pact between the parties to share the representation, however, in 1874 and 1880, although both a Liberal and a Conservative were returned the Liberal share of the vote increased dramatically.[28] Boston was subject to a petition regarding the distribution of free coal by the Liberal candidate. The case was upheld and the seat awarded to the Conservative, however, in doing so, the names of recipients of the free coal were matched against the register and counterfoils and their ballot papers produced to the court so that their votes could be discounted. This eliminated the Liberal majority resulting in the award of the seat to the Conservative and also demonstrated that the ballot was not secret if the court so ordered.

In Wales, Pugh suggested that the secret ballot in '1874 brought gains for the Liberals' although this was 'no more than a continuance of a well-established trend' since 'the basis of political revolt lay in the fact that landlord and rural voter were frequently not of the same community'.[29] In fact, the 'political revolt' in Wales in 1874 consisted of the gain of one seat (Pembroke borough) and the loss of five others. Only three of the 13 Welsh county constituencies were contested and in those the swing against the Liberals was 5%, similar to that in the southern English counties. Of the 15 Welsh borough constituencies 6 were contested and in aggregate showed a swing of 8.2 % to the Conservatives compared to 11.2% in the southern English boroughs. The only exception was Pembroke, the only Liberal gain, which showed an 8.1% swing to the Liberals and was the only result offering some support to the supposedly liberating effect of the ballot in Wales. However, Pembroke's position as an important naval dockyard offers a more plausible explanation of the result. The other naval dockyards in Chatham, Devonport, Plymouth and Portsmouth had been gains for the Conservatives as a result of dockyard employees' concerns over government naval policy and Gladstone's pressure for cuts in defence expenditure. Pembroke might have been expected to follow suit but the Liberal candidate, E. J. Reed, was a former Chief Constructor of the Navy and, despite being a Liberal, was a trenchant critic of the government's naval policy. *The Times* was certainly of the view that these relevantly

[27] Ibid, p. 73 and *Northern Echo*, 4 February 1874.
[28] Craig, *Election Results*.
[29] Pugh, *British politics*, p. 12.

special qualities were the reason for his success.[30] It is also interesting that Cragoe notes 'all the gains made by the Tories at this election occurred in counties where there had been reports of landowners evicting Liberal-voting tenants after the 1868 contests', suggesting they might have feared retribution in 1874, despite the ballot. However, he notes that this was 'not a justification put forward by contemporaries'.[31] Accordingly, the results of the 1874 election in Wales therefore appear to offer no support at all to any change in the impact of influence because of secret voting.

There had been a number of allegations of coercion by Conservative landlords in the Scottish counties but 1874 was one of the Conservative party's most successful incursions into usually solid Liberal territory. Nine seats were gained by the Conservatives in the Scottish counties so they held 16 of the 34 seats; and three seats were gained in the Scottish boroughs where they had no representation previously. This again strongly suggests that coercion was not as important as some suggested or that secret voting had little effect on its impact.

III The Hartington Committee and electoral violence

The experiences of the general election of 1865 had already heightened concerns over the levels of electoral violence and expenses. The potential impact of the significantly increased franchise maintained this expectation for the general election of 1868; indeed, 151 Liberal election addresses for the 1868 election proposed the ballot as a solution to corrupt practices.[32] The 1868 general election justified these concerns. During a long campaign, canvassing and election expenditure reached record levels, but so did rioting and other violence.[33] These difficulties were reflected in a flood of election petitions and, as a result, electoral malpractices again came under increased public scrutiny. This prompted the newly elected Liberal government to take action and the Queen's speech, on the opening of the new Parliament in March 1869, recommended that Parliament 'should inquire into the present modes of conducting Parliamentary and Municipal Elections, and should consider whether it may be possible to provide any further guarantees for their tranquillity, purity, and freedom'.[34]

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[30] *The Times*, 13 February 1874.
[31] Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity*, p. 73;
[32] O'Leary, *Corrupt Practices*, p. 58.
[33] Donald Richter, 'The Role Of Mob Riot In Victorian Elections, 1865-1885', *Victorian Studies*, 15 (1971), 19-28.
[34] *Hansard*, 3rd Series, 1869, cxciv, 648-663, p. 648.

H. A. Bruce, the Home Secretary, moved the motion for the appointment of select committee to carry out this enquiry, and in doing so provided a useful summary of contemporary concerns over electoral behaviour and the secret ballot.[35] One of the greatest of election evils was, he said, 'undoubtedly the enormous expenditure at elections' and this included not only bribery but also its 'sister crime of treating', together with more general expenditure including travel expenses and the employment of paid canvassers, a practice which Bruce thought brought the 'greatest annoyance and trouble' to electors.[36] In 1868 responsibility for election petitions was transferred from the House of Commons to the courts and the location of petition trials was moved from Westminster to the constituencies but Bruce was clear that the cost of petitions had not been materially reduced by localising the enquiries and their 'very great cost' and the risk of having to bear the costs of an unsuccessful petition, even where its reasons seemed 'bona-fide', acted as a great deterrent to contesting the validity of elections.[37] He also thought that 'the greatest of evils connected with elections, and one which most vitally affects the great body of electors, is that of intimidation'.[38] Despite alleged improvements he thought that 'intimidation exists and exists very widely', noting that in many counties 'you might put the letter "L" or the letter "C" against the names of the inhabitants of whole villages when you had ascertained whose property they were'. Influence also extended to that of the employer over the employed and that of customers over tradesmen.[39] The list of electoral evils was completed with the scenes of 'rioting and violence' which 'so frequently characterize a contested election'.[40]

The House of Commons duly appointed a Select Committee on Parliamentary Elections on 16 March 1869 under the chairmanship of Lord Hartington.[41] The committee had equal representation from both parties plus Hartington as chairman giving a total of 23 members.[42] The Committee reported in March 1870 and it recommended the introduction of secret voting, the first official report to do so.[43] A bill was introduced in 1871and was quickly passed by the Commons only to be thrown

[35] Bruce, Henry Austin, first Baron Aberdare (1815–1895).
[36] *Hansard*, 3rd Series, 1869, cxciv, 648-663, p. 649-652.
[37] Ibid, 1869, cxciv, 648-663, p. 651.
[38] Ibid, 1869, cxciv, 648-663, p. 653.
[39] Ibid, 1869, cxciv, 648-663, pp. 652-653.
[40] Ibid, 1869, cxciv, 648-663, p. 653.
[41] Cavendish, Spencer Compton, Marquess of Hartington and eighth duke of Devonshire (1833–1908).
[42] Kinzer, *The Ballot Question*, pp. 119-122.
[43] *PP*, Hartington Report, 1870, (115).

out by the Lords on the grounds that it was too late in the session. However, the bill was reintroduced in the following year and was passed into law, although with no great enthusiasm from either chamber.[44]

The remit of the Hartington Committee was to 'inquire into the present modes of conducting parliamentary and municipal elections' and to 'consider whether it may be possible to provide any further guarantees for their tranquillity, purity and freedom'.[45] The violence which was thought to have characterised the 1868 election made the pursuit of tranquillity one of the Committee's most important tasks. It considered a number of proposals to reduce electoral violence and recommended the abandonment of the hustings both for nomination and for polling in order, inter alia, to reduce riot and disorder at elections. Certainly, so far as contemporary commentators were concerned electoral violence was a significant issue and its reduction was a frequently cited example of the effects of the Ballot Act - particularly because the Act eliminated the hustings both for nominations and for polling.

In February 1876 the government set up a select committee to enquire into the operation of the existing machinery of parliamentary and municipal elections and Sir Joseph Heron, Town Clerk of Manchester, gave evidence that the principal advantage of the ballot was 'the quietness and orderly manner in which the elections are now carried on'. He went on further to note that 'there is no declaration of poll; there is no knowledge of how the poll is going on; and, therefore, the excitement is almost entirely done away with'.[46] This was partly due to the removal of the requirement for public nomination but was also in no small part due to the change in the method of polling.

Whilst these accounts give credibility and colour to the proposition that the Act did produce a fall in election violence they are, nevertheless, unsystematic. More recently Wasserman and Jaggard have carried out a study of electoral violence in English and Welsh constituencies over general elections and by-elections from 1857 to 1880 with the creditable objective of remedying the 'lack of statistical data and an over-reliance on anecdotal evidence within the historiography of election violence', which brings 'into question the validity of numerous statements regarding the

[44] Seymour, *Electoral Reform*, p. 431.
[45] *PP*, Hartington Evidence, 1868-69, (352) (352-I), p. ii.
[46] *PP*, Select Committee on Parliamentary and Municipal Elections, 1876, (162), para. 400 p. 26.

disruption of Victorian elections by outbreaks of violence'.[47] Their results are of considerable significance in assessing the impact of the ballot on the degree of electoral tranquillity. Table II/3 shows the number of incidents of violence reported in their survey for each of the five general elections from 1859.

Table II-3 Incidents of violence and the number of contests 1869 -1880

Year	Contested Constituencies	Incidents of violence	% of contested constituencies with incidents
1859	124	10	8.1%
1865	158	24	15.1%
1868	223	59	26.5%
1874	214	25	11.7%
1880	250	26	10.4%
Sources and notes: Wasserman and Jaggard, 'Electoral Violence in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England and Wales', *Historical Research*, 80 (2007), 124-55.			

It seems both intuitively, and from the research by Wasserman and Jaggard, that there should be a correlation between the total number of incidents of violence and the number of contested seats. The table, accordingly, expresses the number of incidents as a percentage of the number of contested constituencies. Thus, for example, in 1868, over one quarter of the contested constituencies recorded incidents of violence. As Wasserman and Jaggard note 'the particular circumstances of each general election played a role in the scale of violence' and the 1868 election was undoubtedly influenced by the increase in the electorate and the length of the campaign.[48] However, the expanded electorate applied equally to 1874 and 1880 and therefore it cannot be a distinguishing factor between 1868 and the following two

[47] Justin Wasserman and Edwin Jaggard, 'Electoral Violence in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England and Wales', *Historical Research,* 80 (2007), 124-155, p. 127.
The study is summarised as follows: The twenty-three years between 1857 and 1880 yield an impressive sample of electoral violence. A survey of thirty-five contemporary newspapers (The sample included 34 provincial and one national newspaper (*The Times*). The 34 provincial newspapers covered the following broad areas: north England (12), south England (9), the Midlands (5) and Wales (8). *The Nonconformist* journal was also included. The sample was intended to cover as wide an area as possible, although availability and access placed inevitable restrictions on what could be included), home office correspondence and election petition reports uncovered a total of 191 cases of violence during that period. The six general elections of 1857, 1859, 1865, 1868, 1874 and 1880 contributed 181 episodes of disorder between them. A further ten episodes were located during by elections in 1860, 1861, 1862, 1867, 1869, 1871 and 1877. Examples of by-election violence are not the primary focus of this study, but they are included in the sample because they contribute to a general picture of mid-Victorian electioneering.
[48] Ibid, p. 132.

general elections. The very significant decline in incidents in 1874 both absolutely and relative to the number of contested constituencies is highly suggestive of an important impact of the Ballot Act. This is given further weight when the incidents are classified according to their timing during the campaign. For the 1868 election 13% of incidents took place on public nomination day, an event which was abolished by the Act, and which did not result in a compensating increase in violence during other phases of the election.

Wasserman and Jaggard argue that the Ballot Act and the simultaneous passage of the Corrupt Practices Act in 1872[49] 'may have led to some hope for an improvement in electoral conditions', but, they argue, 'such hopes were soon to be proved illusory for the scale of violence in 1874 was second only to that of 1868, suggesting that alterations to the procedure of electioneering had little impact on the outbreak of violence'.[50] However, their own figures hardly support this conclusion. The number of violent incidents in 1874 were less than half those in 1868 which is hardly a 'little impact'. Similarly, although there were 3 more incidents in 1874 than 1865, the latter election was not held under the expanded electorate of 1868 and 1874.

Accordingly, it is possible to conclude that the Act had a significant impact in reducing electoral violence. This conclusion is supported by the anecdotal evidence of contemporaries who generally thought that elections were far more tranquil after the Ballot Act came into operation. It is also supported by Wasserman and Jaggard's survey of reported incidents of electoral violence which shows a rising trend of such incidents in the general elections of 1865 and 1868 was reversed in 1874, when the rate of such incidents was half that of 1868.

IV Bribery, election petitions and expenses

The Hartington Committee's second challenge was to consider further guarantees for the purity of elections. Bribery, treating and similar practices had a long history in British electoral politics. The earliest reference to treating was in 1467 and the first MP to be fined for bribing his electors served during the reign of Elizabeth I.[51]

[49] When the final Ballot bill was introduced in February 1872 the government took the opportunity to simultaneously introduce a Corrupt Practices bill comprising certain clauses which had previously been dropped from the Ballot bill due to time pressures. The two bills were then taken concurrently. One of the relevant provisions of the Act was a ban on public-houses being used as committee rooms. See O'Leary, *Corrupt Practices*, p. 83 and f. 1.
[50] Jaggard, 'Electoral Violence', p. 145.
[51] O'Leary, *Corrupt Practices*, pp. 6-7.

O'Gorman has traced the occurrence of electoral corruption in pre-Reform England and 'the way in which election rituals served to create a separate moral framework within which bribery and treating were acceptable'.[52] The period from the Great Reform Act to the Corrupt Practices Act of 1883 continued to show examples of corruption and the concerns of contemporaries were reflected in a series of Acts of Parliament aimed at its deterrence and punishment.[53] Supporters of secret voting had high hopes that bribery would be eliminated by the introduction of the ballot, usually because they thought no candidate would incur the expense of bribery if he could not be sure how a man had voted. This section will show that this view was largely mistaken for two reasons; firstly, that candidates nevertheless did continue to bribe individuals despite having no certain knowledge of an individual's vote, and, secondly, where direct bribery was curtailed corrupt expenditure continued in other forms such as treating. A contemporary writer made the latter point succinctly, describing the change as 'formerly it was retail, now it is wholesale, expenditure'.[54]

Constituencies of relatively small size also continued to provide practical opportunities for corruption and, despite the increase in the electorate as a result of the 1867 Reform Act, there remained opportunities to bribe electors without the expense being prohibitive. In large constituencies the sheer size of the electorate made bribery and corruption much less feasible, and it is not surprising that almost all documented corruption took place in smaller boroughs. The expansion of the franchise had not been accompanied by a redistribution of seats in an attempt to equalise electorates across constituencies and the distribution of the electorate varied widely. Of the 353 constituencies in Britain there were still some 69, returning 73 members, which had an electorate of less than 1500.[55] There was, therefore, scope to affect the outcome of an election by influencing a relatively small number of voters in the smaller constituencies. As well as size, the location of the constituency made a difference, for it is striking how corruption was almost wholly confined to the English boroughs. Over the general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880 there were 62 constituencies which gave rise to election petitions or were mentioned in evidence to the Hartington Committee

[52] Kathryn Rix, 'The Elimination of Corrupt Practices in British Elections? Reassessing the Impact of the 1883 Corrupt Practices Act', *English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), 65-97, p. 69. See also O'Gorman, 'Campaign Rituals'; O'Gorman, *Patrons and Parties*. See also Seymour, *Electoral Reform*, p. 163 et seq.
[53] O'Leary, *Corrupt Practices*, p. 230; Rix, 'Elimination of Corrupt Practices', p, 67.
[54] 'Before And After The Ballot', *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine*, January 1881, p. 45; Rix, 'Elimination of Corrupt Practices', p. 67.
[55] Based on the electorates for the general election of 1874 as an approximate mid-point for the period.

concerning corruption.[56] Of these 62 constituencies, 59 were English boroughs and 49 had an electorate, in 1874, of less than 5,000. Although landlord coercion and influence were frequently mentioned in Welsh and Scottish constituencies, corruption in the form of bribery and treating was very seldom mentioned and in Scotland was considered to be practically non-existent. Corruption was also still a practical proposition in marginal constituencies; in 1868, for example, there were 65 constituencies where the winning majority was 150 votes or less.[57] These marginal constituencies also often included those with larger electorates; for instance, contests in Blackburn, Norfolk South, Herefordshire and Southampton, all constituencies with an electorate greater than 6,000, were decided by fewer than 150 votes in 1880. It is clear, therefore, that the opportunity to influence an election by influencing relatively small numbers of voters was reasonably widespread.

The assessment of the extent of corruption is complicated by its constantly moving definitions and practice, together with the ambivalent attitudes of MPs ranging from practical acceptance, through concern for their own expense, to moral indignation The practical and legal definitions of corruption were also complicated by the extent and frequency of the range of benefits which a prospective member might offer an elector in order to somehow influence his vote; a range which was limited only by the candidate's imagination and the depth of his pocket. The range included, but was not limited to, the direct monetary bribing of a voter; bribery through gifts of articles or benefits in kind; and treating, where copious amounts of alcohol were made available to electors often through the provision of candidates' committee rooms in public houses. The definition of bribery was an issue with which the Hartington Committee struggled and the problem of treating led the Committee to consider the closure of all public houses on election days.

This changing background is well illustrated by the history of the treatment of travel expenses as potentially corrupt electoral payments. Providing the means for an elector to travel from their home or their place of work to their appointed polling station was very important in a period when there could be a considerable distance between these locations, especially in large county constituencies and boroughs with a

[56] *PP*, Hartington Evidence, 1868-69, (352) (352-I).
[57] Based on votes calculated as described in Appendix 1. The comparative figures for 1874 and 1880 were 59 and 74 constituencies respectively.

significant number of outvoters. Legislation in 1858[58] made it lawful for a candidate to spend money on the conveyance of voters, but illegal for him or his agent to give money directly to their supporters for their fare.[59] The moral ambivalence of members' attitudes was shown when the effectiveness of this legislation was diluted by a House of Commons decision that a member could not be unseated for its contravention.[60] The 1867 Reform Act made illegal the payment of travelling expenses in nearly all boroughs but members could still not be unseated for violation of these provisions.[61] A final absurdity was reached in 1880 when the final act of the Conservative administration was to pass what O'Leary has called 'the only piece of reactionary electoral legislation of the century'.[62] The dissolution of Parliament was announced on 8 March 1880 together with a statement that a bill would be introduced immediately to remove all restrictions on the provision of conveyances. Despite protests from the Liberals and others, particularly in respect of the 'increase, probably of vast proportions, in the cost of elections',[63] the bill was forced through, even though most members had already departed to campaign in their constituencies. This legislation was to have serious consequences for the cost of the 1880 election. The legislative position of travel expenses was finally given some decisive definition by the 1883 Corrupt Practices Act. This Act contained a clause 'making payment for the conveyance of electors to and from the poll in either county or borough contests an illegal practice which jeopardised the seat of the member involved'.[64]

If these problems of legal and practical definition make difficult the assessment of the impact of the Ballot Act on corruption, the matter is further complicated by the difficulty of assessing the quantum of corruption from the nature of the available evidence. Party records, press reports and private political correspondence provide valuable indicative background information but, unlike petitions and Royal Commissions, they inevitably suffer from a frequent inability to sustain any burden of proof. As a result this section focuses on the evidence of petitions, Royal Commissions and trends in election expenditure as a means of assessing the impact of the Ballot Act.

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[58] Corrupt Practices Act, 1858, 21 & 22 Vict., c. 87.
[59] William B. Gwyn, *Democracy and the Cost of Politics in Britain* (London, 1962), p. 49.
[60] *PP*, 1860, Report from the Select Committee on the Corrupt Practices Prevention Act, (329) (1854), paragraphs 1781 and 1782.
[61] Gwyn, *Democracy and the Cost of Politics*, p. 50.
[62] O'Leary, *Corrupt Practices*, p. 118.
[63] Ibid, p. 115.
[64] Gwyn, *Democracy and the Cost of Politics*, p. 51.

Petitions are not without their difficulties themselves as evidence for the extent of and trends in electoral corruption and two particular issues influence their reliability as potential indicators. Forming a judgement on the relationship between the extent of corruption evident from election petitions and its actual overall level is one of the most difficult. Many regarded these instances to be only the visible portion of a substantial iceberg but it is impossible to find a reliable basis for speculating how extensive the actual level of corruption might have been based on the evidence of petitions. Nevertheless, provided that the relationship of petitions to the unknown total amount of electoral corruption remained constant, then the trends in the level of corruption in election petitions ought to be an accurate indicator of the trends in the unknown totality of electoral corruption.[65]

The second issue relates to the development of the legislative environment for election petitions and whether there were changes in this environment which may have affected the number and success of petitions so that changes in trends of election petitions were affected by issues other than the amount of corruption at elections. There were certainly difficulties in bringing election petitions including, primarily, their expense, their uncertain outcome, the unpopularity of petitions and the potential for a 'lack of purity' in the petitioner's own campaign leading to recriminatory counter-charges.[66] There is, however, as described below, a strong case that there was no significant change in these factors between 1868 and 1883 and subsequently, and that the environment for election petitions remained sufficiently stable for valid conclusions to be drawn about the overall level of electoral corruption from changes in the level of election petitions.

Election petitions were indeed expensive. A petition had to be brought by an interested individual, who was potentially liable for the total costs of the action if it failed. These costs could be very significant. In 1868 jurisdiction for election petitions was moved from parliament to the courts with trials now to be held in the constituency concerned. These changes brought an additional uncertainty to costs and O'Leary has

[65] Kathryn Rix has noted O'Leary's view that the success of the 1883 Corrupt Practices Act was demonstrated by the decline in election petitions after its introduction so that corrupt practices were eliminated by 1911. (Rix, 'Elimination of Corrupt Practices', p. 82; O'Leary, *Corrupt Practices*.) She has urged caution in interpreting the decline in petitions in this way because of the other factors which can influence the number petitions, the not least of which was their cost. (Rix, 'Elimination of Corrupt Practices', 82-83.) These arguments do not apply to the period under consideration and it has been argued above that conditions in the 1870s were such as to make petitions a reasonable indicator of trends in electoral corruption in this period.

[66] Rix, 'Elimination of Corrupt Practices', pp. 84-5.

suggested it brought an increase.[67] Similarly, the uncertain outcome of petitions may well have been a deterrent to the bringing of petitions, although there is no evidence to suppose there was a change in the degree of that uncertainty during the period from 1868 to 1880. The system introduced in 1868 was undoubtedly successful in achieving its aim of producing more consistency in the interpretation and application of the law. The 1875 Select Committee on Corrupt Practices recommended that two judges should try petitions but also recognised that the system had improved significantly in the consistency of judicial decisions.[68] As O'Leary has shown, the judges 'set about building up a corpus of election law'.[69] This development of consistency, which provided further confidence for the petitioner, is illustrated by the consistency of judicial appointments to petition trials. The 97 petition trials between 1868 and 1882 required in theory the appointment of 124 judges. In fact, over two thirds of all the cases were tried by just 5 judges who made significant contributions to the interpretation and consistency of application of election law. Thus, far from proving an increasing deterrent from petitioning over this period it is quite possible that the development of trial procedures and election law may have encouraged the bringing of election petitions.

Thus, if the legislative environment for election petitions between 1868 and 1883 and later may be regarded as stable, it is possible to use changes in the incidence of election petitions as a measure of changes in the overall level of electoral corruption over that period. Table II/4 shows the petitions made and their results in respect of the general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880.

[67] O'Leary, *Corrupt Practices*, p. 92 and pp. 34-43. See also Seymour, *Electoral Reform*, pp. 424-425.
[68] *PP*, 1875, Report from the Select Committee on Corrupt Practices Prevention and Election Petitions Acts, (225), see, for instance, paragraphs 635 and 636.
[69] O'Leary, *Corrupt Practices*, p. 231.

Table II-4 Petitions in respect of elections in England & Wales

Election	Petitions	Successful petitions		Successful Petitions			
				Conservative		Liberal	
	Number	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1868	46	12	26	8	66	4	33
1874	22	14	64	5	36	9	64
1880	29	19	66	11	58	8	42

Sources and notes: *PP*, 1874 (219) Parliamentary Elections Act, 1868. Return of all election petitions tried in England by election judges under the Parliamentary Elections Act, 1868, up to the 30th January 1874; and, similar returns for Ireland and Scotland. *PP*, 1883 (325) Election petitions. Return of all election petitions tried in England, Scotland, and Ireland, respectively, by election judges, or decided by the court on special cases, under "the Parliamentary Elections Act, 1868," since 30 January 1874; &c.

The table clearly shows the significant number of petitions generated by the 1868 general election and helps put into context the supposed problems of the 1880 contest. It also shows that the distribution of the successful petitions between the parties was relatively balanced – 24 for the Conservatives and 21 for the Liberals over the period 1868 to 1880. However, there was a clear increase in both the absolute number and the proportion of petitions which were successful. Seymour suggested this may have been because the new tribunals exercised 'greater severity and demanded closer adherence to the law than had been the custom in times past'.[70] Nevertheless, since the form of the tribunal was unchanged from its introduction in 1868 save only for the introduction of a second judge in 1879, the change may be attributable to the development of case law giving more certainty and predictability to the assessment of the likely outcome of particular cases which may have prevented less likely petitions coming to trial. More importantly, for present purposes, the decline in petitions in 1874 occurs after the introduction of the ballot in 1872. Additionally, although there is a slight increase in petitions in 1880 this is most probably due to the increase in contested constituencies in that year compared to the relatively low level in 1874. Table II/5 shows the number of petitions presented as a proportion of contested constituencies and that the proportion declined consistently in 1874 and 1880. These statistics also show that whilst the proportion of petitions per contested constituency fell over the period the proportion of successful petitions increased.

[70] Seymour, *Electoral Reform*, p. 427.

Table II-5 Petitions in respect of elections in England & Wales

Election	Contested Constituencies	Petitions	Total petitions per Contested Constituency	Successful petitions per Contested Constituency
1868	223	46	0.21	0.054
1874	214	22	0.10	0.065
1880	250	29	0.08	0.076
Sources and notes: *PP*,1874 (219) Parliamentary Elections Act, 1868. Return of all election petitions tried in England by election judges under the Parliamentary Elections Act, 1868, up to the 30th January 1874; and, similar returns for Ireland and Scotland. *PP*, 1883 (325) Election petitions. Return of all election petitions tried in England, Scotland, and Ireland, respectively, by election judges, or decided by the court on special cases, under "the Parliamentary Elections Act, 1868," since 30 January 1874; &c. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results*.				

If election petitions gave some indication of the level of prosecuted bribery, candidates' election expenditure is another potential source of evidence of trends in corruption. There were no legal restrictions on a candidate's expenditure for the 1868, 1874 and 1880 elections but candidates were required, under the Corrupt Practices Act of 1857, to submit for publication returns summarising their election expenses. These returns need to be treated with some care since they were undoubtedly subject to the natural temptations of creative accounting and as Thomas Hoskins, legal agent to the Liberal party, rather dubiously remarked in 1880 'I consider that the election expenses are the legal and proper election expenses, and that any illegal and improper payment is not an election expense which ought to be returned to the returning officer'.[71] Nevertheless, returns were generally received for most of the 421 constituencies giving a relatively large number of returns and whilst reporting malpractice may make the absolute levels of expenditure inaccurate it is a reasonable expectation that it was constant over elections. As a result some overall conclusions as to the trends in election expenditure would remain valid.

The degree of analysis of expenditure required by the legislation gradually increased over time and the returns for 1880 give the best examples of the type of expenditure incurred by parliamentary candidates. Tables II/6 and II/7 illustrate this by showing the expenditure for Essex South at the 1880 general election.

[71] Hanham, *Elections*, p. 249.

Table II-6 Returning officers' charges in Essex South

	£
Cost of polling booths	125
Cost of Dies, Ballot Papers, Advertising Placards, Stationery, &c	108
Cost of Presiding Officers' Clerks, Counting Clerks, &c	253
Fee charged by Returning Officer or his Official	175
All other charges of the Returning Officer	11
Total Returning Officer's Charges	672
Sources and notes: *PP*, 1880 (382) Election charges. Return of charges made to candidates at the late elections by returning officers	

Table II-7 Expenses of candidates in Essex South, exclusive of the returning officers' charges

	Baring (C)	Makins (C)	Buxton (L)	Lyell (L)	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Agents including Clerks, Messengers and Canvassers	2,296	2,296	453	453	5,498
Hire of Conveyances	754	754	421	421	2,350
Printing and Advertising	4,060	4,060	617	617	9,354
All other expenses	488	488	601	601	2,178
Total	7598	7598	2092	2092	19,380
Sources and notes: *PP*, 1880 (382) Election charges. Return of charges made to candidates at the late elections by returning officers					

The cost of conveyances, amounting to £2,350, is significant because of the change in legislation which made this expenditure legal for the 1880 election. The following Table II/8 summarises the results of an analysis of returns of candidates' expenses as aggregated in the relevant parliamentary papers.[72] This table shows that the aggregate cost of the elections declined in 1874 but increased substantially in 1880.

The aggregate cost of elections is, of course, heavily affected by the number of contested seats and Table II/9 shows the average cost per contested constituency in England & Wales and demonstrates that 60% of the increase in the cost of the 1880 general election, compared to 1868, arose from the increase in the number of contested constituencies rather than from any underlying increase in the cost of elections.

[72] The three reports are: *PP*, 1868-69, Election expenses, (424); *PP*, 1874, Election charges, (358); *PP*, Election charges, 1880, (382).

Table II-8 Aggregate election expenses from candidates' returns for contested constituencies in England & Wales

All £s	1868	1874	1880
Counties			
England	599098	344251	651055
Wales	56028	29856	79178
Total Counties	655126	374107	730773
Boroughs			
England	457067	369794	646517
Wales	31069	28077	28623
Total Boroughs	488136	397871	675140
Grand Total	1143262	771978	1405913
Sources and notes: *PP*, 1868-69, (424), Election expenses; *PP*, 1874, (358), Election charges; *PP*, 1880, (382), Election charges.			

Table II-9 Election expenditure per contested constituency in England & Wales excluding hire of conveyances in 1880

All £s	1868	1874	1880
Counties			
Total expenditure	655126	374107	564159
Contested constituencies	55	36	63
Average cost	11911	10392	8955
Boroughs			
Total expenditure	488136	397871	566852
Contested constituencies	159	167	179
Average cost	3070	2382	3166
Total average cost	5342	3803	4673
Sources and notes: *PP*, 1868-69, (424), Election expenses; *PP*, 1874, (358), Election charges; *PP*, 1880, (382), Election charges.			

In Great Britain the 1880 election cost £1.7 million based on candidates' returns, although its true cost has been estimated at £2.5 million.[73] These aggregates represented the end of a trend which was to be arrested by the expenditure limitations imposed by the 1883 Corrupt Practices Act which was partially motivated by the desire of candidates to place some limits on the increasing cost of elections and the totals achieved in 1874 and 1880 were never matched again before the First World War.[74]

[73] Gwyn, *Democracy and the Cost of Politics*, pp. 51and 55.
[74] Rix, 'Elimination of Corrupt Practices'.

Seymour sought to summarise the effect of the ballot on the incidence of bribery when he said:

> In the boroughs where the traditions of the old-time corruption were not strong, and where electioneering methods were generally honest, the ballot was said to have discouraged the spread of bribery. Many witnesses agreed that secret voting was effective in this respect; and a few declared that bribery was driven entirely from their constituencies.[75]

Edward Lewis the member for Londonderry City and a lawyer and senior organiser for the Conservatives considered that 'I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that the ballot has diminished bribery and I think that elections are far more pure than they used to be'.[76] Sir Joseph Heron, the Town Clerk of Manchester, was of the view that 'there is no doubt that if there was a temptation of bribery that is done away with to a very large extent by the secrecy of the ballot system'.[77] The evidence presented above suggests that these conclusions were at best premature. It may well be that these comments were referring to direct bribery and there may have been some reduction in that, although the 1880 election showed it had by no means disappeared. Some of the statistics on elections petitions suggest that the Ballot Act did have an effect on bribery, treating and similar practices. The anecdotal evidence also suggests there may have been a reduction. Election petitions, however, show clearly that bribery could still occur in some constituencies. Election expenditure also suggests that although direct bribery may have reduced, treating and similar practices were still common. The excessive cost of the 1880 general election may have been exaggerated because of the 'one-off' effect of travel costs but it was nevertheless more expensive than 1874 and it seems clear that the Ballot Act did not have a great deal of impact on bribery, treating and similar practices, taken as a whole.

V Influence

The third task of the Hartington Committee was to consider further guarantees for the freedom of elections from undue influence. There are three major problems in considering the impact of undue influence at elections. All were recognised by the Committee and they have continued to effect the historical consideration of the issue. The first challenge was to establish what was exactly meant by undue influence in an

[75] Seymour, *Electoral Reform*, p. 434.
[76] *PP*, Select Committee on Corrupt Practices, 1875, (225), paragraph 771, p. 42.
[77] *PP*, Select Committee on Parliamentary and Municipal Elections, 1876, (162), paragraph 7, p. 58.

electoral context. The Committee discussed 'intimidation of workmen by masters, of tenants by landlords, of tradesmen by customers, and of working men by each other' as well as 'intimidation by ministers of religion'.[78] These were some of the most obvious examples, but the list can be extended. The Committee recognised the very wide range of behaviour that could be construed as undue influence and noted that 'there exists during the canvass in most boroughs a system of working upon voters through private considerations whether of interest, hope or fear, for political purposes, and this system enables undue influence in a modified form to be constantly practised.'[79] These were all different kinds of explicit intimidation, coercion and pressure but influence could also be much more subtle. Joyce's work on Lancashire factory politics has described how 'behind actual and threatened dismissals were a range of influences, potent in the intimate factory neighbourhood long after the institution of the secret ballot'.[80] He suggested that influence in the mills operated on many levels from the obvious coercion of the screw, through the influence of factory supervisors until ultimately 'this influence…….shaped the identity of locales and their people's sense of place'.[81]

The second major issue was achieving some consensus on the dividing line in such a wide range of practices between acceptable and unacceptable influence. In addition, this had to be followed by the provision of an appropriate legal definition which was also capable of practical enforcement. The Corrupt Practices Act of 1854 had defined undue influence as 'the making use of, or threatening, any force or restraint, or in any manner practising intimidation upon a person in order to influence his vote'.[82] This broad, and rather vague, definition was to remain in force until extended by the 1883 Corrupt Practices Act.[83]

The election judges themselves were acutely aware of these difficulties. In his judgement on the 1868 Beverley election petition Baron Martin recognised that no law could, or ought to, prevent the influence of a personal relationship or, he thought, 'the influence arising from high birth; from the candidate living in the neighbourhood of

[78] *PP*, Hartington Report, 1870, (115), p. 4.
[79] Ibid, p. 4.
[80] Patrick Joyce, 'The Factory Politics of Lancashire in the Later Nineteenth Century', *Historical Journal*, 18 (1975), 525-553, p. 541.
[81] Ibid, pp. 541-545.
[82] Seymour, *Electoral Reform*, p. 229.
[83] Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act 1883 (46 & 47 Vict. c. 51).

the town, and being known and respected there'.[84] Similarly, another election judge, Sir Samuel Martin, in giving evidence to the Hartington Committee, agreed that the terms of the 1854 definition represented a very broad test, but declined to give an opinion as to whether a threat by a priest that failure to vote in a certain way would incur penalties in the afterlife, would be caught by this legislation.[85]

The final major issue which faced contemporary legislators, and which also faces historians, is the difficulty in determining the extent of undue influence. The Hartington Committee was in no doubt that intimidation was practised and that 'the fear of it widely prevails among that class of voters who are liable to its influence'.[86] Edward Leatham, the member for Huddersfield and a member of the committee was even more certain when he moved the Second Reading of an early draft of a Ballot Bill in 1870, asserting that:

> Coercion by landlords, employers, and customers is as rampant as ever it was—that the whole electoral atmosphere is charged with it—and that, in many constituencies, the main element of political success is not the use of reason, or of eloquence, or even of money—but the use of pressure.[87]

The Committee, however, did acknowledge that as soon as evidence of influence becomes:

> Known in the locality, applications have been received that witnesses on the other side should be examined, who have denied the charges brought against themselves, but have usually attributed similar practices to their opponents.[88]

Certainly, this absence of certain and overwhelming evidence of widespread improper influence appears to be reflected in the results of the trials of election petitions and the investigations of Royal Commissions between 1868 and 1880 when very few substantially supported examples of undue influence were reported.

Without the reliable identification of the incidence and amount of undue influence it is less easy to provide a sound basis from which to try and ascertain the potential effects, if any, of the ballot. The basis of the Hartington Committee's selection of witnesses is unclear and it appears that they often appeared by voluntary application. The evidence taken by the Committee is not, therefore, based on a

[84] *PP*, 1868-69, Election petitions. Copy of the shorthand writers' notes of the judgments delivered by the judges selected in pursuance of "the Parliamentary Elections Act, 1868," for the trial of election petitions, (120) (120-I).
[85] *PP*, Hartington Evidence, 1868-69, (352) (352-I), paragraphs 10609 to 10611.
[86] *PP*, Hartington Report, 1870, (115), p.4.
[87] *Hansard*, 3rd Series1870, cc, 10-60, p. 10.
[88] *PP*, Hartington Report, 1870, (115), p. 4.

representative sample. Nevertheless, it remains the best available collection of testimony on this issue. It is accordingly instructive to look at the potential impact of the ballot on those constituencies which were mentioned in evidence to the Hartington committee as having experienced examples of the application of undue influence. Sixteen constituencies were discussed in this respect by the Committee covering boroughs and counties in England, Wales and Scotland. Table II/10 shows these constituencies, the party allegiance of members elected in 1868, 1874 and 1880 together with the electoral swing to or (from) the Conservatives in 1874 and 1880.

Table II-10 Constituencies which the Hartington Committee thought may have been subject to influence

Constituency	Party seats 1868	Party seats 1874	Party seats 1880	Swing to(from) Conservatives 1874 %	Swing to(from) Conservatives 1880 %
Ashton	C	C	C	(0.6)	(5.2)
Blackburn	CC	CL	LC	(1.6)	(1.3)
Bradford	LL	LC	LL	Na	(1.9)
Carlisle	LL	LL	LL	(5.6)	(1.6)
Chippenham	C	C	C	9.8	(12.3)
Gravesend	L	C	L	7.9	(6.3)
Liverpool	CCL	CCL	CCL	1.3	uncontested
Oldham	LL	CC	LL	0.7	(5.0)
Stalybridge	C	C	L	(1.9)	(3.3)
Windsor	L	C	C	13.5	(8.6)
Cheshire Mid	CC	CC	CC	uncontested	uncontested at previous
Carmarthenshire	LC	CC	LC	4.4	(15.3)
Merionethshire	L	L	L	uncontested	uncontested
Monmouthshire	CC	CC	CC	uncontested	uncontested at previous
Dumfriesshire	L	C	L	3.5	(3.7)
Roxburghshire	L	C	L	6.0	(1.2)
Sources and notes: Hartington Report, *PP*, 1870, (115). Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results*; own calculations.					

It is apparent from examination of this table that there were no dramatic changes of fortune for the parties in these constituencies after 1868 which suggests either that undue influence had not been a major factor, or that the ballot had failed to eliminate its impact. Closer review of some of the results suggests that the ballot might

have removed the impact of some undue influence, but in other constituencies it may well have continued to operate.

The general election of 1874 showed a strong swing to the Conservatives in most British constituencies but Carlisle was notable in turning strongly to the Liberals. Carlisle was a long established borough, returning two members since 1832, and having an electorate of 4,693 in 1874. It had been generally Liberal since 1832 and returned two Liberal members in 1868 with 51% of the vote and who had a close run majority of 14 votes for the second seat. The Liberals retained both seats in 1874 with an exceptional swing of 5.6% against the Conservatives. They also retained both seats in 1880 with a small swing in their favour. The Hartington Committee heard evidence from a former Mayor of Carlisle about what was known as the railway screw.[89] This referred to the activities of William Hodgson, Conservative candidate for Carlisle and also a director of the London and North Western Railway which was a substantial employer in the town. During the 1868 campaign Hodgson canvassed personally for support and obtained the vote of 136 of the 154 men from the railway who were electors. Subsequently, 5 of the 15 who had voted Liberal were dismissed. Hodgson nevertheless lost by 14 votes in 1868 but was still able to stand successfully for Cumberland East at the same election. In 1874 Hodgson retained his seat in the county constituency and did not stand for the borough. At this election the borough was one of the few English constituencies to swing strongly to the Liberals, the second victorious Liberal candidate achieving a majority of 310 over the first defeated Conservative, suggesting that the railway voters had swung back behind the Liberals because the ballot ensured their votes were not known to Hodgson.

Chippenham, on the other hand, exhibited many features of a small constituency in which influence might have been expected to operate but in which the ballot appears to have had little effect on the electoral outcome. It was a small borough in Wiltshire with an electorate of 979 in 1874 and was classified by Hanham as a seat controlled by patrons; in Chippenham's case, in 1868, Sir Gabriel Goldney, a notable landowner and banker.[90] Almost all of the local landowners in Chippenham were Conservatives and allegations were made to the Hartington Committee that they had used substantial influence on the tenants of their houses and allotments to vote

[89] *PP*, Hartington Evidence, 1868-69, (352) (352-I), paragraphs 9359 to 9489; see also Hanham, *Elections*, pp. 88-89.
[90] Hanham, *Elections*, p. 409.

Conservative. It was further alleged that a number of tenants who had voted Liberal were evicted after the 1865 election. It was suggested that almost all such tenants had voted Conservative at the 1868 election and a number of the newly enfranchised were also intimidated by threat of loss of employment. The witness was convinced that the ballot was the only remedy to this state of affairs.[91]

As with many of these cases, however, the introduction of the ballot appears to have had no substantial impact. Goldney was elected as the Conservative member in 1868 with a majority of 59, and 54% of the vote. Despite the introduction of the Act, Goldney stood again in 1874 and was returned with an increased majority of 226 with 64% of the vote. The swing in his favour of 9.8% was very much in line with the average swing to the Conservatives in all southern English boroughs. Goldney also held the seat in 1880, although the swing against him was larger than average at that election. Again, therefore, there is no evidence that secret voting substantially changed electoral patterns in situations where such influence was thought to exist, suggesting that either the degree of such influence could have been overestimated or that it may have continued to exist in ways which were not so obviously susceptible to the remedy of secret voting.

Windsor was a small southern borough with an electorate of 1,951 in 1874. Colonel Robert Richardson-Gardner came to live in the borough in 1865 and, having purchased some 129 houses which gave their occupants the vote, decided to contest the 1868 election as a Conservative, narrowly losing by 8 votes to the sitting Liberal member. Windsor did not have an outstanding reputation for purity – the winners of the 1865 election had been unseated on petition and the Hartington Committee had heard evidence of the susceptibility of some Windsor electors to bribery – and Richardson-Gardner petitioned against the election but was unsuccessful. After this defeat he promptly evicted the 20 tenants of his properties who had voted against him. Subsequently, Richardson-Gardner stood again and won the 1874 election with by a majority of 446 and a swing of 13.5% in his favour. The defeated Liberal candidate then petitioned on a number of grounds, including giving gifts to residents and bribery, all of which were dismissed. By far the most interesting charge, however, related to the eviction of Richardson-Gardner's tenants after the 1868 election which, it was claimed, carried a threat through to the 1874 election. This was ultimately rejected by the judge

[91] *PP*, Hartington Evidence, 1868-69, (352) (352-I), paragraph 4958 and paragraphs 5040-5042.

on the grounds that Richardson-Gardner had not repeated the threat of eviction and, in a judgement of supreme irony, Baron Bramwell said that his tenants were protected by the Ballot Act. The Baron said any threat was prevented from being effective:

> Because the effect of the Ballot Act is that a man can vote with safety; he can vote according to his conscience with safety, and the threat can have no effect upon him, unless you suppose he is going to be asked how he voted, which is an offence, a misdemeanour.[92]

Thus, the petition was dismissed and Richardson-Gardner kept his seat. It is, of course, impossible to prove whether undue influence continued in this case and it might well be that Richardson-Gardner simply replaced his troublesome tenants with those with political views similar to his own.

A number of examples of alleged coercion and intimidation were made in respect of certain of the Welsh counties but if such intimidation was extensive the ballot seems to have little effect on the election results in the Welsh counties. In 1874 the Conservatives gained three seats and lost none so that they represented 11 of the 17 Welsh county seats. None of the constituencies showed a swing toward the Liberals who also left 4 of the 13 county constituencies uncontested.

The Scottish constituencies were unique in being free from bribery but that did not stop frequent accusations of undue influence directed at Conservative landlords in particular. The Committee heard evidence that considerable landlord pressure had been exerted on behalf of the Conservative candidates in both Dumfriesshire and Roxburghshire during the 1868 election, although in the case of Roxburghshire this was disputed during the duration of the Committee's investigations.[93] Nevertheless, both constituencies returned Liberal members in 1868 when these matters were complained of, and returned Conservative members in 1874 when the supposedly pressurised tenants had the benefit of the ballot.

The by-election held for Shaftesbury on 30 August 1873 provides similar ambivalent evidence of the impact of the Act on undue influence. Shaftesbury was a market town with 1,188 electors registered for its 1873 by-election and had returned Liberal members since 1841, usually without a contest. The constituency contained a number of estates in the surrounding countryside, the most significant being those of the Grosvenor family centred on Motcombe Hall. The acquisition of these estates by

[92] *PP*, 1874, Windsor election. Copy of the shorthand writer's notes of the judgment delivered by Mr. Baron Bramwell in the case of the Windsor election petition, (152), p. 6.
[93] *PP*, Hartington Evidence, 1868-69, (352) (352-I), paragraphs 5813 and 5814.

the Grosvenors had begun in 1820 with the purchase of 400 premises in the town and the Motcombe estate itself, made with the express intention of controlling the election of Shaftesbury's representation through influencing the votes of the tenants, most of whom were tenants at will and therefore subject to potentially summary eviction.

With the death of the second marquis, the estates came under the control of his wife, Elizabeth Leveson-Gower, a lady of impeccable Whig credentials (being the younger daughter of the first Duke of Sutherland). The Marchioness had become more reactionary in her later years to the point where she 'feared and loathed Gladstone as a dangerous demagogic maniac'.[94] Ironically, in 1873 Shaftesbury's MP was George Grenfell Glynn, Liberal Chief Whip and one of Gladstone's closest associates. Glyn had been returned unopposed at the previous four elections, but the death of his father in 1873 elevated him to the peerage and so triggered the by-election. It is difficult to believe that the views of the Marchioness of Westminster were other than instrumental in the Conservative's decision to put forward a candidate. In a seat which had not been contested since 1837 and which had sent a Conservative to parliament for only 3 years in the previous 50 (and then by default because the Liberal victor in 1837 was unseated on petition), there must also have been some expectation that the Marchioness's views would be influential in order to offer any prospect of success. As a result Stanford Benett, a well-known and popular figure in the neighbourhood, came forward as a prospective Conservative candidate for the borough's first contested parliamentary election since 1847.[95]

Benett won the contest with 591 votes to the Liberal's 562. One writer to *The Times* was in no doubt that this was due to the influence of the Marchioness, explaining that Shaftesbury had five polling districts, and that 624 electors (more than 50%) were located in Shaftesbury town and the Motcombe estates where the Marchioness owned almost all the property. She had, he suggested, canvassed every tenant, through her land agent, in favour of Benett, and was in no doubt that the Conservative victory was attributable to the influence of the Marchioness.[96] If that is true then it is a clear indication that the ballot had not removed such power; on the other hand the seat had not been contested since 1847 and it may well have been that

[94] F. M. L. Thompson, 'Grosvenor, Hugh Lupus, first duke of Westminster (1825–1899)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11667, accessed 3 Nov 2009]
[95] *Western Mail*, 29 August 1873.
[96] *The Times*, 13 September 1873.

there was a strong undercurrent of Conservative support as there was in most similar southern English boroughs in the 1874 general election.

The Ballot Act had been passed in 1872 with a provision requiring its renewal in ten years which, as the tenth anniversary of its enactment approached, gave a particular focus to public debate on its effectiveness. Contemporary views were similarly ambivalent about its impact on undue influence. The *Edinburgh Review* was still opposing the renewal of the ballot in 1881 and offered the view that 'in 1872 it was still possible to contend that secret voting would put an end to bribery and intimidation; but the experience of two general elections has put an end to all such illusions'.[97] The paper argued that bribery had never been confined to paying for individual votes and whereas the ballot had limited that form of corruption it was nevertheless still extensive through the general treating provided by candidates. The argument against the prevention of intimidation was less convincing. The writer suggested that 'as for intimidation, we see no escape from the conclusion that the ballot is no protection, unless the voter chooses to tell a lie'. But the writer admitted that it nevertheless had been effective in those circumstances.[98] *Blackwood's Magazine* complained that one of the supposed benefits of the ballot was to have been the reduction of election expenditure, and this had singularly failed to occur.[99] It was, however, more impressed with what it had thought was the elimination of undue influence:

> If by secret voting tenants are able to record their votes in opposition to the views of their landlords without fear of consequences, so also the working-men are independent of the grinding tyranny of their taskmasters and overseers, and are secure from the pains and penalties to which they were formerly subjected when they differed from their employers: they are no longer to be seen, in large manufacturing districts, actually driven to the polling- booth like sheep. In this respect the ballot is undeniably an improvement.[100]

We are still left with the dilemma, therefore, of whether the lack of apparent impact of the Ballot Act reflects the absence of significant undue influence prior to the Act or whether such influence continued after the Act, either because the Act was ineffectual or because influence continued in a manner which was less susceptible to the corrective effects of secret voting.

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[97] 'Electoral Reform, Electoral Bribery: The Ballot', *Westminster Review*, 59.2 (1881), 453.
[98] Ibid.
[99] 'Before And After The Ballot', *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine*, 129 (1881), 45.
[100] Ibid.

One tentative conclusion is that the more obvious and ostensible forms of threat and coercion were lessened. Nevertheless, as Joyce has noted, although a distinction may be drawn between coercion and influence, 'the inadequacy of coercion as a main explanation of the nature and longevity of mass political attitudes must be insisted upon' but 'its presence ought not be underestimated. Behind actual and threatened dismissal were a range of influences, potent in the intimate factory neighbourhood long after the institution of the secret ballot'.[101]

VI Changes in the nature of electoral politics

This final part of this chapter briefly considers the possible effects of the Act in the wider context of the purpose and impact of electoral legislation in general. Two historians of this period have approached the Ballot Act from this direction, giving readings different from those hitherto discussed. The first was presented by Vernon, who suggested that the Ballot Act formed an extension of a process which saw the progressive reduction in democracy in English politics between the first and second reform acts, 'as political subjectivities and the public political sphere were defined in increasingly restrictive and exclusive fashions'. In addition, he argued, the dynamics of political communication were changing so that individuals had 'less and less power in the creation of their own political languages and identities' and 'a mass of legislation sought to discipline popular modes of political communication'. Thus, legislation enacted with the ostensible purpose of eliminating corruption 'sought to discipline popular politics, tempting it out from its customary venue of the pub to purpose-built halls in which audiences could be better regulated'.[102]

Under this thesis the Ballot Act becomes a specific part of this process, particularly through the removal of public nominations and the creation of indoor polling stations which only voters were allowed to enter. As a result the occasions when 'the disenfranchised exercised most influence' were 'legislated out of existence'. This meant that 'no longer could the disenfranchised vote at the nomination or hold a vigil beside the hustings to intimidate the voters, nor could they deploy exclusive dealing, for how were they to tell how the shopkeepers and tradesmen had voted; and

[101] Joyce, 'Factory Politics', p. 541.
[102] Vernon, *Politics*, p. 9.

'inevitably, the Act also precipitated the decline of a whole range of electoral ceremonies like processions to and from the hustings'.[103]

One of the difficulties with this argument is that it fails to adequately account for the effect of the extension of the franchise in 1867. The argument for the importance of the hustings in hearing the voice of the disenfranchised is largely based on examples from elections before 1868. But many, if not most, of this group were enfranchised by the 1867 Act and, as a result, the 1868 election provides the only valid basis to support this claim. It is indeed true that certain groups, most particularly women, were still not enfranchised but there is no strong argument that they were significant participants in the hustings in 1868. The other major difficulty is that this argument presents a somewhat rose-tinted view of the political impact of the hustings. The paragraphs below argue that the political power of the hustings in 1868 was practically non-existent and, therefore, to argue that their loss was a major blow to the political power of the disenfranchised is misguided.

Lawrence has suggested that the elimination of public nominations removed a valuable means of testing public opinion through the show of hands at the nomination. In addition, it is argued, the secret ballot also made it impossible to determine which electors were true party supporters, since it was not known how any individual elector had voted, and this, as a result, precluded the use of pre-election trial ballots to test candidates' popularity for the subsequent election. These two factors, it is argued, emphasised the shift of candidate selection to local party organisations.[104] It has also been argued that the loss of the hustings 'abolished a vital bastion of political accountability' by removing the only platform on which all candidates were present together and to which all electors had the right of attendance since candidates' election meetings were essentially private meetings.[105] This, taken together with the introduction of household suffrage made the show of hands at the hustings more or less indicative of the state of public opinion.[106]

However, arguing that the hustings had an important role in testing the acceptability of candidates and in obtaining a view of public opinion suggests that this display of voters' opinions could lead to the withdrawal of a particular candidate from

[103] Ibid, p. 158.
[104] Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, p. 46.
[105] Ibid, p. 47.
[106] Ibid, p. 46.

the contest. The evidence of the 1868 general election tends to suggest otherwise and leads to the conclusion that use of the hustings had very little impact on the conduct of elections, except that their elimination certainly reduced violence. It was virtually uniform practice for candidates to publicly announce their candidature well in advance of the election. Indeed, because a poll, if required, took place on the day of nomination or very shortly thereafter, such advance declaration of candidature was necessary for any campaigning to be organised and carried out. As a result the newspapers regularly carried listings of the declared, but not yet nominated candidates for each constituency and it is, accordingly, possible to compare the names of those candidates, immediately prior to the period of nomination and polling, with those who ultimately contested the constituency. Any differences arising because, for instance, a candidate was recorded in the newspapers as having declared their intention to stand but were absent from the poll or the presence of a candidate in the results of the poll who had not been recorded in the newspapers as having declared his intention to seek nomination, would be strong evidence that the hustings had influenced the selection of candidates. In fact, examination of the 260 English constituencies reveals no changes at all between the newspaper lists of intended nominations and the candidates actually nominated. This provides convincing evidence that, in 1868, the hustings had no effect on the selection of candidates and that suggestions that the Ballot Act removed an influential source of public influence are, accordingly, quite wrong.

The additional argument that the secret ballot made it impossible to determine which electors were true party supporters with the consequent impossibility of holding trial ballots for candidate selection also runs counter to the views of contemporary and later commentators. The *Fortnightly Review* argued in 1870 that one of the consequences of secret voting would be the development of local party organisation which enabled the identification of party supporters so that they could be encouraged to the polls.[107] Indeed, as Seymour remarked the protection offered the political conscience of the voter soon proved slight; by demanding pledges, the agent was often able to exert as strong an influence as in the days of open voting.[108] Ostrogorski had also argued that the party organisations soon began to acquire an ascendance over the elector as great as, or greater than, that formerly possessed by the aristocracy.[109] Thus,

[107] Edward Maitland, 'The Misrepresentation of Majorities', *Fortnightly Review*, 8 (1870), 114-117.
[108] Seymour, *Electoral Reform*, p. 433.
[109] Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization*, pp. 458-463.

secret voting quite possibly improved the identification of true party supporters for local organisations.

VII Conclusions

Supporters of secret voting had high hopes for the beneficial impact of the 1872 Act on violence, corruption and coercion at elections. So far as concerns violence their hopes appear to have been fulfilled. There appears to have been a significant decline in the numbers of reported incidents of violence at the 1874 and 1880 general elections as compared to that of 1868. The anecdotal evidence from testimony given to Parliamentary inquiries by election officials strongly supports this view. Almost without exception they commented upon the far greater degree of tranquillity particularly on election day. Violence was by no means eliminated but the introduction of secure polling stations and the elimination of the public hustings certainly reduced its incidence.

Corruption was a different matter and the evidence of election petitions and Royal Commissions showed that bribery and other forms of incentives continued despite the belief of the proponents of the Act that no agent would bribe an elector when he could no longer be certain which way the elector had voted. Petitions increased over the period but this was probably because of the increase in contested seats in 1880. Petitions per contested seat successively declined at each general election. Some anecdotal evidence also suggested that direct bribery had been reduced. Nevertheless, evidence given to Parliamentary inquiries and contemporary writers generally supported the view that the Act had done little to reduce corruption, although it may have partially changed its application from bribing individual voters to more general methods such as more extensive treating.

Coercion is much more problematic since it is as difficult to prove its existence as its elimination. Certainly, the security of secret voting does not seem to have resulted in a significant change in voting patterns. It is equally true that undue influence was certainly more subtle and deep-seated than the more obvious examples of coercion by landlords and factory owners. Vernon and Lawrence argued that the Act was instrumental in reducing the public political sphere. The elimination of the hustings

and the focus on party meetings which were essentially private reduced, they argued, the participation of non-electors in the political process. The 1868 election is the only election which was fought on the new franchise whilst there was open polling and the hustings were still in use. The experience of this election shows that the hustings had no impact at all on candidates' selection. There is also little evidence that the development of party organisation during the period reduced the access of the public to the political process. Meetings were generally open and the growth of newspapers and literacy suggests the opposite.

Chapter III Issues, ideology, language and rhetoric

I Introduction

Understanding why electors voted as they did and identifying the issues and influences that affected their choice of candidate and party is, of course the holy grail of the study of electoral politics. In the second half of the nineteenth century there were no opinion polls or similar contemporary surveys of electors' opinions. Electors were frequently canvassed so that their views could be known to candidates but canvas returns do not record the nature of those views and do not survive in significant quantities. We are, thus, forced to use indirect indicators to try and ascertain those opinions. One source of such indicators are the election addresses of candidates for, whilst election addresses cannot tell us the factors which would determine the electors' choices, they can at least 'tell us more conveniently than anything else what issues the politicians thought would determine that choice'[1]. Gladstone thought they were important. He wrote to his chief whip, A. W. Peel, about what had gone wrong at the 1874 general election and asked for:

> An account of those Conservative members who have pledged themselves in their addresses (I do not say speeches because this might be more difficult to obtain) to the repeal of the Income Tax and the terms on which they have done it. [2]

A number of studies of late-Victorian and Edwardian elections have used the addresses of candidates as important sources for demonstrating the relative importance of individual issues and as a way of elucidating the contemporary language of electoral politics, but no analysis has been published for the elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880. [3]

This chapter focuses on this gap and describes and analyses the results of a sample of candidates' addresses for each of the elections. There is no central repository or collection of candidates' addresses for these elections but it was common practice for them to be published in national and local newspapers. The addresses identified for this research have very largely been obtained by searches of newspapers and some

[1] Blewett, *The Peers*.
[2] Matthew, *The Gladstone Diaries*, pp. 455-456, 6 February 1874.
[3] See for example: Readman, 'The 1895 General Election', Blewett, *The Peers*, p. 316.

obtained from other archival sources. This means that addresses not published in newspapers of which copies survive or which are in other archives which not been consulted, have not been examined. By the same token it is not possible to be certain that all candidates in fact issued an address. If all candidates had issued addresses then the samples would represent between 35% and 40%, depending on the election, of the maximum number of potential addresses. Given the high degree of consistency in the issues contained in the sample addresses, as shown later in this Chapter, these percentages offer some confidence that the sample is reasonably indicative of the population as a whole. It has not been possible to select the sample on a completely systematic basis and all available addresses from surveys of national and regional newspapers and indices of other archival sources have been used. Nevertheless, an effort has been made to ensure, where possible, that there is a reasonable distribution of the sample items covering the parties, counties, boroughs and regions. In order to obtain overall results it is obviously necessary to categorise the views of individual candidates and clearly some degree of judgement has to be exercised in classifying different candidates' descriptions of their policies and political views under a manageable number of headings. Some nuances of opinion are inevitably lost as a result of this process. In addition, this process has also ignored whether a candidate was for or against a particular policy. For instance, in 1868 a very high number of candidates mentioned the proposed disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. This was usually, although not exclusively, supported by Liberal candidates and usually opposed by Conservatives but all cases in which it is mentioned have been aggregated to summarise its importance as an issue. Issues have been ranked according to the number of addresses in which they were mentioned irrespective of the order in which they appeared in a candidate's individual address.

Most candidates issued a written address which was distributed in the constituency and frequently published, as paid advertising, in local and/or national newspapers. The length and detail of these addresses varied very considerably – an average statement might have been of some 300 words but some were much shorter, others much longer. Long-standing members, often Conservatives in county seats, sometimes issued perfunctory statements noting their length of tenure of office and that their views and opinions were well known to their constituents, but with no further elucidation of what these views actually were. Others, frequently radical Liberal candidates, could be very lengthy addressing a large number of issues in some detail.

One politician certainly given to lengthy addresses was Gladstone, which was perhaps unsurprising given the length of many of his speeches. In 1874 Disraeli described his opponent's statement as a 'prolix narrative'.[4]

This chapter first considers the results of the review of addresses for each of the general elections in turn, tabulating the most frequently cited issues by party and broad geographical location and nature of the constituency in which the candidate was standing as well as briefly discussing their significance. It then considers some more general issues which become evident from the research. Issues have also been categorised by region[5] to provide a more detailed analysis of any geographical variation in the frequency with which they were mentioned. These analyses are important in examining the consistency of the issues raised by candidates over a wide geographical spread of constituencies because it has significant implications for the debate over the nationalisation of electoral politics during the period. Indeed it shows there were few significant differences in issues between geographical regions which suggests that the emphasis on the importance of locality to electoral politics in this period may be overstated. The sample is then used to make some tentative suggestions concerning the importance of the leader's address as a party manifesto. Finally, the evidence of the available addresses is used to examine the development of the use of patriotic language by Conservative candidates and, in particular, to review Cunningham's suggestion that it was only during the late 1870s the Conservative party took over the mantle of popular patriotism.[6]

II Issues in the general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880

The following tables summarise the main issues mentioned in election addresses issued for the general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880, showing the particular issue concerned and the percentage of addresses in which it was mentioned. The incidence of issues is further analysed between Liberal and Conservative candidates, between southern and northern English constituencies and between English county and English borough constituencies and Wales and Scotland.

[4] Election address of B. Disraeli, *Daily News*, 26 January 1874.
[5] The method of defining the regions is set out below in the paragraphs dealing with locality.
[6] Hugh Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914', *History Workshop Journal*, 12 (1981), 8-33; Hugh Cunningham, 'British Public Opinion and the Eastern Question 1877-1878', (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Sussex, 1969).

Table III-1 Issues in 1868 election addresses

	% of addresses mentioning the issue categorised by party and type of constituency								
1868	All	Liberals	Conservatives	North	South	English Counties	English Boroughs	Wales	Scotland
Irish Church	63.2%	64.8%	58.0%	54.9%	66.4%	61.6%	61.5%	81.3%	72.7%
Education	40.7%	43.0%	34.1%	41.8%	37.2%	38.4%	40.4%	50.0%	54.5%
Economy	33.8%	37.8%	27.3%	31.9%	34.5%	28.3%	38.5%	31.3%	45.5%
Reform Act	31.2%	31.3%	30.7%	27.5%	32.7%	27.3%	33.7%	31.3%	45.5%
Church of England	22.5%	12.6%	34.1%	18.7%	28.3%	31.3%	17.3%	12.5%	9.1%
Ballot	21.6%	29.6%	10.2%	22.0%	23.0%	14.1%	30.8%	12.5%	18.2%
Tax	19.5%	21.3%	11.4%	11.0%	26.5%	27.3%	12.5%	25.0%	9.1%
Foreign policy	15.2%	10.0%	21.6%	15.4%	15.0%	14.1%	16.3%	0.0%	36.4%
Record	12.1%	12.2%	13.6%	11.0%	12.4%	12.1%	11.5%	12.5%	18.2%
Religious liberty	9.5%	12.2%	4.5%	5.5%	12.4%	10.1%	8.7%	18.8%	0.0%
Malt Tax	5.2%	3.5%	5.7%	2.2%	8.0%	11.1%	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%
Church rates	4.8%	7.0%	1.1%	4.4%	5.3%	4.0%	5.8%	6.3%	0.0%
Ireland and union	3.0%	3.0%	2.3%	4.4%	2.7%	5.1%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%
County Boards	2.6%	2.6%	1.1%	0.0%	4.4%	5.1%	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%
Bankruptcy	2.2%	3.5%	1.1%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	12.5%	9.1%

In Great Britain there were 877 candidates at the 1868 election. It is not known how many issued addresses. The results above are based on the examination of 303 addresses.

Sources and notes: Analysis of candidates' addresses. Description of Issues: **Irish Church**: The disestablishment of the Irish Church; **Education**: The introduction of universal elementary education; **Economy**: Statements dealing with the need for economy and efficiency in government expenditure; **Reform Act**: Statements supporting, and usually claiming credit for, the 1867 Reform Act; **Church of England**: References to threats to the established church in England; **Ballot**: Statements supporting further electoral reform , often by the introduction of the ballot but also covering the repeal of the rating provisions of the Reform Act and the extension of the borough franchise; **Tax** : Statements of support for tax reductions and especially the burden of local taxation; **Foreign Policy**: Statements on foreign policy; **Record**: References to the candidate's and/or the government's record; **Religious liberty**: Freedom of religion; **Malt Tax**: Abolition of the Malt Tax; **Church rates**: Abolition of church rates; **Ireland and union**: Home rule; **County Boards**: Institution of county boards; **Bankruptcy**: Reform of the laws of bankruptcy.

Table III-2 Issues in 1874 election addresses

	% of addresses mentioning the issue categorised by party and type of constituency								
1874	All	Liberals	Conservatives	North	South	English Counties	English Boroughs	Wales	Scotland
Income Tax	36.3%	36.5%	36.1%	30.3%	47.6%	32.2%	46.3%	35.3%	5.7%
Education	35.0%	25.2%	45.8%	25.8%	45.5%	37.9%	38.1%	44.1%	5.7%
Local taxation	29.7%	28.9%	30.6%	20.2%	38.6%	35.6%	29.3%	35.3%	11.4%
Record	29.4%	40.9%	16.7%	32.6%	34.5%	35.6%	32.7%	23.5%	5.7%
Church of England	19.5%	6.9%	33.3%	20.2%	21.4%	19.5%	21.8%	20.6%	8.6%
Franchise extension	16.5%	20.8%	11.8%	13.5%	17.2%	12.6%	17.7%	20.6%	17.1%
Land law	15.2%	23.9%	5.6%	12.4%	13.1%	13.8%	12.2%	29.4%	17.1%
Drinking	12.2%	8.2%	16.7%	12.4%	11.0%	14.9%	9.5%	23.5%	5.7%
Foreign policy	11.9%	7.5%	16.7%	5.6%	18.6%	16.1%	12.2%	11.8%	0.0%
Indirect tax	10.2%	17.0%	2.8%	9.0%	15.2%	4.6%	17.7%	2.9%	0.0%
Game laws	6.9%	10.1%	3.5%	4.5%	5.5%	5.7%	4.8%	8.8%	17.1%
Irish land	5.6%	4.4%	6.9%	4.5%	8.3%	8.0%	6.1%	2.9%	0.0%
Employment law	5.3%	7.5%	2.8%	7.9%	5.5%	5.7%	6.8%	0.0%	2.9%
Religious liberty	5.0%	8.2%	1.4%	2.2%	2.8%	0.0%	4.1%	26.5%	0.0%
Economy	2.6%	3.1%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	23.5%	0.0%
Ballot	2.0%	1.9%	2.1%	1.1%	2.8%	2.3%	2.0%	2.9%	0.0%
Free trade	1.0%	1.9%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	2.9%	2.9%
Others	2.1%	3.2%	0.7%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.7%	14.7%	0.0%

In Great Britain there were 899 candidates at the 1874 election. It is not known how many issued addresses. The results above are based on the examination of 297 addresses.

Sources and notes: Analysis of candidates' addresses. Description of Issues: **Income Tax:** Abolition of income tax; **Education**: Clause 25 and religious instruction in elementary education; **Local taxation**: Reduction of local taxation; **Record**: References to the candidate's and/or the government's record; **Church of England**: References to threats to the established church in England; **Franchise Extension**: Extension of the borough franchise to the counties; **Land law:** Changes to the land laws including tenant improvements; **Drinking**: Temperance**; Foreign policy**: Statements on foreign policy; **Indirect tax** : Statements of support for tax reductions and especially the burden of local taxation; **Game laws**: Game laws; **Irish Land**: Irish land laws; **Employment law**: Employment Laws; **Religious liberty**: Freedom of religion; **Economy**: Statements dealing with the need for economy and efficiency in government expenditure; **Ballot**: Statements supporting further electoral reform. **Free Trade**: Free trade.

Table III-3 Issues in 1880 election addresses

	% of addresses mentioning the issue categorised by party and type of constituency								
1880	All	Liberals	Conservatives	North	South	English Counties	English Boroughs	Wales	Scotland
Foreign policy strength	32.3%	1.7%	64.5%	30.1%	41.2%	43.1%	29.7%	28.6%	16.7%
Foreign policy moral	29.4%	55.6%	1.8%	33.8%	25.2%	32.8%	27.0%	25.7%	31.3%
Land law	25.9%	35.4%	16.0%	31.6%	19.1%	35.3%	17.6%	14.3%	37.5%
Economy	20.7%	30.3%	10.7%	24.8%	22.9%	25.0%	23.0%	11.4%	10.4%
Record	19.0%	21.3%	16.6%	20.3%	20.6%	12.9%	26.4%	25.7%	6.3%
Franchise extension	19.0%	34.3%	3.0%	21.8%	15.3%	21.6%	16.2%	11.4%	27.1%
Depression	18.2%	13.5%	23.1%	18.8%	22.9%	31.0%	12.8%	20.0%	2.1%
Drinking	17.6%	19.1%	16.0%	21.8%	14.5%	19.0%	17.6%	17.1%	14.6%
Ireland	16.1%	1.7%	31.4%	15.8%	18.3%	19.8%	14.9%	20.0%	8.3%
Church of England	15.0%	4.5%	26.0%	15.8%	11.5%	12.9%	14.2%	5.7%	29.2%
Ireland criticisms	11.8%	23.0%	0.0%	19.5%	6.9%	12.9%	13.5%	5.7%	8.3%
Local government	11.5%	19.1%	3.6%	15.0%	11.5%	24.1%	4.7%	5.7%	6.3%
Burials	10.1%	19.1%	0.6%	10.5%	9.9%	13.8%	7.4%	11.4%	8.3%
Education	4.3%	2.2%	6.5%	1.5%	5.3%	3.4%	3.4%	5.7%	8.3%
Hypothec	3.7%	4.5%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	27.1%
Local connections	3.7%	2.8%	4.7%	5.3%	2.3%	4.3%	3.4%	8.6%	0.0%
Employer liability	2.0%	2.8%	1.2%	3.8%	0.8%	0.0%	4.1%	0.0%	2.1%
Other	2.1%	4.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	17.2%	0.0%
In Great Britain there were 919 candidates at the 1880 election. It is not known how many issued addresses. The results above are based on the examination of 335 addresses.									
Sources and notes: Analysis of candidates' addresses. Description of Issues: **Foreign policy strength**: Robust foreign policy mainly Conservatives; **Foreign policy morality**: Principled foreign policy mainly Liberals; **Land law**: Amendments to land law; **Economy**: Statements dealing with the need for economy and efficiency in government expenditure; **Record**: References to the candidate's and/or the government's record; **Franchise extension**: Extension of borough franchise to counties; **Depression**: References to economic conditions; **Drinking**: Temperance issues; **Ireland** : Home rule; **Church of England**: Protection of established church; **Ireland criticisms**: Criticisms of Irish policy; **Local government**: Representation in the counties; **Burials**: Nonconformist burials; **Education**: Generally school fees; **Hypothec**: Scottish land law.									

Ireland

Various aspects of the Irish question were major issues in British politics in this period. In 1868 the question of the disestablishment of the Irish Church was the most frequently mentioned issue, with more than 63% of the candidates referring to it. This may have been reflective of the success of Gladstone's strategy to unite his own party by making disestablishment of the Irish Church a key issue. The Liberals did not have an obviously united policy platform in the later 1860s and it has been suggested that after leaving office in 1866 Gladstone turned to Ireland and the disestablishment of the Anglican Church of Ireland as 'a sovereign method for reuniting the fractured forces of

Liberalism'.[7] In a party which contained Radicals and Non-conformists the disestablishment issue became 'the Liberals' prime rallying-cry at the 1868 election'.[8]

Most Liberal candidates, in one form or another, supported Gladstone's proposals. Samuel Morley, one of the Liberal candidates for Bristol, commended Gladstone's view that the Irish church was a 'religious scandal, a political outrage, and a national injustice'.[9] Morley reflected these remarks in his speeches and in a lunchtime address to printing workers when he rhetorically asked whether:

> The principles of the Liberal party and the manner in which they had carried out those great principles to a successful issue, and the dignified action taken by them in reference to Mr. Gladstone's measure for doing justice to Ireland, had not deserved the hearty support of the working classes and every section of the Liberal party.[10]

Many Conservatives discussed the issue in the more general context of the union of Ireland and Great Britain suggesting disestablishment of the Irish Church threatened the establishment of the Church of England and in some cases the monarchy and the constitution. The general terms of this view were aptly summarised by Sir Richard Glass, the Conservative candidate for Bewdley, who said:

> The attempt to disestablish the Irish Branch of the Established Church as an inroad upon our Constitution, and upon the Religious Principles established at the Reformation, and as dangerous to the State, and to the real liberties of the people.[11]

Other Conservatives like Walter Stanhope, the candidate for Yorkshire West Riding South, said that 'an attack upon the property of the National Church, as well as its connection with the State, has been entered upon through the introduction of the Irish Church Bill'.[12]

The issue was mentioned relatively equally in the counties and boroughs but tended to be mentioned slightly more in southern English constituencies (66.4%) compared to those in the north (54.9%). This difference may have been due to the higher incidence of nonconformist voters in the northern constituencies, but at any rate

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[7] K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886*, (Oxford, 1998), p. 219.
[8] Parry, *Rise and Fall*, p.225.
[9] Election address of Samuel Morley, *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 7 November 1868.
[10] Speech by Samuel Morley, *Bristol Mercury*, 7 November 1868.
[11] Election address of Sir Richard Glass, *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 31 October 1868. Glass was later unseated on petition.
[12] Election address of Walter Spencer Stanhope, *Leeds Mercury*, 5 November 1868. Supporters of the disestablishment of the Irish church were also often keen to pronounce their protestant faith. Thus Lord Frederick Cavendish in Yorkshire West Riding North confidently hoped that the issue would be judged by electors 'in a manner which they themselves would desire if in the position of the Irish people. As a Protestant and a member of the Church of England I feel that nothing could be more detrimental to the cause of true religion than the present political state of the Church in Ireland'. (Election address of F. Cavendish, *Bradford Observer*, 5 October 1868.)

it is dwarfed by the emphasis given in Wales to disestablishment, where despite the large number of nonconformist voters that issue was considered by far the most important. (This is dealt with further below in the section dealing with Wales which suggests that this issue may have tended to be important in Wales as a result of emergent Welsh nationalism). Nonconformist Scotland also regarded the Irish Church as the most important issue in 1868 only to a slightly lesser extent than Wales and more so than in England.

1874 saw a decline in references to Irish issues. The Liberal government had completed the disestablishment of the Irish Church and passed the Irish Land Act in 1870. Some Conservatives did not think this had achieved the pacification of Ireland. Henry Raikes, the Conservative candidate for Chester, took the view that the Liberals had been elected in 1868 'because they promised to conciliate Ireland' but 'Ireland was not conciliated'.[13] Liberal candidates naturally took the opposite view, often claiming credit for the beneficial effects of the government's legislation. On the whole, however, Ireland was not a significant issue in Great Britain in the 1874 general election, the Irish land issue being the most frequently mentioned but by only 6% of all candidates. In 1880 Irish issues became rather more prominent again, tending to be referred to in two main ways. Firstly, some candidates, mainly Liberals, made criticisms of the Conservative government's failure to respond to what they regarded as genuine Irish grievances. Secondly, others, mainly Conservatives, sought to emphasise the danger that a Liberal administration might grant home rule. Beaconsfield had sought to make Ireland his key election issue, referring in his own address to the Irish movement for home rule, and noting that:

> A portion of its population is attempting to sever the constitutional tie which unites it to Great Britain' and seeking to associate this with a likely Liberal acquiescence he said there were 'some who challenge the expediency of the Imperial character of this realm. Having attempted and failed to enfeeble our colonies by their policy of decomposition, they perhaps now recognise in the disintegration of the United Kingdom a mode which will not only accomplish, but precipitate, their purpose.[14]

Many Conservative candidates echoed this view, professing their complete opposition to Home Rule. Very few Liberal candidates were prepared to support Home Rule but were then left with the dilemma of how to respond to Irish agitation. Many voiced criticisms of the government's approach and urged them to respond to Irish grievances.

[13] Election address of Henry Cecil Raikes, *Cheshire Observer*, 31 January 1874.
[14] Letter from Beaconsfield to the Duke of Marlborough, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, published in the *Bury Post*, 8 March 1880.

Frederick Gibbs, the Liberal candidate at Chichester, gave a typical exposition of this position when he said:

> I look upon what is called "Home Rule for Ireland" as an impossible scheme, opposed alike to the unity of the Empire, and to the best interests of Ireland itself. But while resolved firmly to resist the agitation set on foot in favour of the scheme, I think every reasonable demand of the Irish people should be met, and every grievance redressed, in the confidence that just legislation will render such agitation powerless.[15]

Education

It has been suggested that 'elementary education was not considered a significant or urgent issue in the 1868 election'.[16] In fact, it was a major issue both then and in the 1874 general election. In 1868 the need to address the availability and accessibility of primary education was widely recognised and the subject was mentioned by over 41% of candidates. Gladstone had referred to the issue in his own address, noting that 'all are agreed both upon its vital importance and upon its pressing urgency'.[17] Disraeli produced an address at least equal in length to Gladstone's, but had nothing to say about education. Nevertheless, 34% of Conservative candidates did mention the issue. It was also difficult to distinguish between the parties from candidates' addresses, for the majority of those that did discuss education opted for bland statements such as 'I would give earnest support to any measure tending to render it more general and efficient', or 'I am in hopes that the government will shortly be able to introduce a measure for the further extension and improvement of Elementary Education in Scotland'.[18] Some Liberal candidates were prepared to go further and raise the issue of secular education – an issue that was to become important in 1874. Captain Sherard Osborn, the Liberal candidate at Birkenhead said he would 'strongly support legislative measures tending to bring a sound secular education within reach of every child in the United Kingdom'; and Edward Miall, a Liberal at Bradford promised to carefully examine every proposal put to parliament 'for extending a sound un-sectarian education'.[19]After the passage of Forster's Education Act in 1870, the issue was the second most important at the 1874 election, being mentioned by nearly 35% of candidates. Many historians have argued that

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[15] Election address of Frederick Waymouth Gibbs, *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 27 March 1880.
[16] W. B. Stephens, *Education in Britain, 1750-1914*, (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 80.
[17] Election address of W.E. Gladstone, *Manchester Times*, 10 October 1868.
[18] Election addresses of Claud Alexander and Richard Davies, *North Wales Chronicle*, 3 October 1868.
[19] Election addresses of Captain Sherard Osborn, *The Times*, 22 September 1868; and Edward Miall, *Bradford Observer*, 10 November 1868.

nonconformist dissatisfaction with the legislation was a source of electoral weakness for the Liberals because of Clause 25 of the Act.[20] Hoppen, for example, felt able to write in 1998 that 'discontent among significant sections of nonconformist opinion hurt Liberal candidates at by-elections and at the general election of 1874'.[21] However, this view may be regarded as problematic. Parry has pointed out that the Liberals performed better in 1874 in seats where non-conformity was strongest. This was largely in the northern English boroughs where the swing to the Conservatives was lower than in the southern English constituencies.[22] He also argued that by the time of the general election Clause 25 had ceased to be an issue for many nonconformists because they had won most School Board elections and were, therefore able to control its operation.[23] Rather than Clause 25 alienating nonconformists, education was an important issue because the Conservatives used it to persuade Anglican Liberal supporters in the southern English constituencies to abstain or to vote Conservative. They did this by playing on those voters' concerns of further Liberal changes to the Act to eliminate religion from education and their fear of the threat of vociferous Liberal extremists groups such as Chamberlain's National Education League. This was conjoined with the Conservative allegations that the Liberals were a threat to the established church which were frequently couched in terms of patriotic ideology and imagery.[24] This view is strongly supported by an analysis of candidates' addresses in those seats which the Conservatives won in 1874. Their victory was very largely gained in the counties and southern English seats. In these constituencies a remarkable 61% of Conservative candidates referred to education compared 46% nationally. Only 31% of Liberals referred to the issue.

The language of the Conservative addresses clearly demonstrates the attempt to play on voter concerns by implying that Liberals did not support religious education. Edward Green, the Conservative candidate at Wakefield, said:

> I am decidedly opposed to the repeal of the 25th Clause of that Act: nor do I consider that it is consistent with liberty of conscience to compel parents, against their will, to

[20] For example Patricia Auspos, 'Radicalism, Pressure Groups, and Party Politics: From the National Education League to the National Liberal Federation', *Journal of British Studies,* 20 (1980), 184-204; D. A. Hamer, *The Politics of Electoral Pressure: A Study in the History of Victorian Reform Agitations*, (Hassocks, 1977). Clause 25 potentially allowed denominational teaching to be supported from the rates.
[21] Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, p. 599.
[22] Parry, *Democracy and religion*, pp. 396-398.
[23] Ibid, pp. 398-399
[24] Ibid, p. 403.

> send their children to schools where Bible teaching is excluded. I am strongly in favour of religious education.[25]

Arthur Mills, the successful Conservative candidate at Exeter, claimed that a strong Conservative element was required in the House of Lords so that 'valid securities can be obtained for the maintenance of religious education, of the union of Church and State and the honour of England at home and abroad'.[26] Parry acknowledged the importance of the issue noting that:

> Conservatives were the real beneficiaries of the alarm that disestablishment and secular education would promote ungodliness in Great Britain. The increasing strength of the Conservatives in the 1870s and 1880s owed a lot to its appeal to those who identified it with respectability, order and the religious political and moral establishment, and its defence of the church was a crucial part of that image.[27]

By 1880 passions concerning the issue had receded and despite the fact that there were no amendments to the legislation less than 5% of English candidates mentioned the issue.

Franchise

Various aspects of the franchise and electoral procedures continued to be issues at all three general elections. In 1868 candidates were plainly wary of the newly enlarged electorate and some 31% of candidates mentioned the 1867 Reform Act, many making a point of stating their support and pleasure at the Reform Act, with both parties often seeking to claim credit for its passage. James Ashbury, the unsuccessful Conservative candidate for Brighton, rejoiced 'that the Reform Bill [had] been passed [so that] the great body of the intelligent working class [had] obtained the rights of citizenship'. Ashbury noted that he himself was 'sprung from the people and glorified in their elevation'.[28] Some of the remarks made by candidates may have been regarded as patronising. Henry Pochin, the Liberal member for Stafford, took pains to emphasise to the newly enfranchised voters the care that they should take when they:

> Exercise important political rights for the first time', as well as the need 'to sacrifice, if necessary, small private and personal considerations, for the nobler purpose of securing from the Legislature such laws as will be for the interests of the community as a whole, rather than such that favour the interests of any special class.[29]

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[25] Election address of Edward Green, successful Conservative candidate at Wakefield, *Leeds Mercury*, 28 January 1874.
[26] Election address of Arthur Mills, *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 28 January 1874.
[27] J. P. Parry, 'Nonconformity, clericalism and 'Englishness': the United Kingdom', in Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (eds), *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (Cambridge, 2003), 152-180, p. 178.
[28] Election Address of James Ashbury, *Morning Post*, 4 November 1868.
[29] Election address of Henry D. Pochin, *Birmingham Daily Post*, 31 October 1868.

The candidates making these points were certainly following Gladstone and Disraeli. Gladstone noted the prescience of the Russell government's resignation 'as the most becoming method' by which they could secure the early triumph of reform.[30] According to him the bill introduced by the Conservatives was 'amended and almost transformed by the opposition'.[31] Disraeli had no doubt where the credit lay. He noted that reform was an issue which had 'embarrassed and enfeebled successive administrations', and went on to say:

> The Conservative government decided to terminate this state of affairs and by a series of measures, in the course of two years, we brought about a settlement of the question, broad in it principles, large and various in its provisions, but, as we believe, in unison with the character of the country and calculated to animate the spirit of the community and add strength and stability to the state.[32]

Captain Sherard Osborn had no doubt that Gladstone deserved the credit stating that 'but for the earnestness and disinterestedness of Mr Gladstone we should never have extorted from the fears of the Tories the new Reform Bill and its extended franchise'.[33]

The issue was mentioned about the same number of times by Liberals (31%) and Conservatives (31%) alike. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the nature of the changes, in England the issue was raised slightly more often in boroughs (34%) than in counties (27%). N. M. Rothschild, the Liberal candidate for Aylesbury, thought that the question of reform had 'now been settled on a broad and comprehensive basis'. [34] Miall, when standing in 1868, was at pains to point out that the Reform Act had given marked prominence to a line of policy in the direction of which [he had] laboured for many years with unflagging interest'.[35] Some Conservative plaudits for the Act were less than fulsome, however. Lord George Manners, the successful Conservative candidate for Cambridgeshire, could only say that he looked 'without dismay at the consequences of that Act'.[36]Apart from congratulating newly enfranchised voters and seeking to take credit for the Reform Act, a number of candidates commented on aspects of further electoral reform. The most common proposals were support for the introduction of the ballot, the redistribution of seats and the abolition of the Reform

[30] Election address of W. E. Gladstone, *Manchester Times*, 10 October 1868.
[31] Election address of W. E. Gladstone, *Manchester Times*, 10 October 1868.
[32] Election address of B. Disraeli, *Birmingham Daily Post*, October 5, 1868.
[33] Election address of Captain Sherard Osborn , *The Times*, 22 September 1868.
[34] Election address of N. M. de Rothschild, *The Times*, 8 October 1868.
[35] Election address of Edward Miall, *Bradford Observer*, 10 November 1868.
[36] Election Address of Lord George Manners, *Morning Post*, 8 September 1868.

Act clauses requiring the direct payment of rates. Slightly fewer commented on the extension of the borough franchise to the counties, whilst the Birmingham Liberal candidates predictably advocated the removal of the minority clause. Such further electoral reform was overwhelmingly a Liberal issue, with their candidates raising the issue three times more often than Conservatives. In England, these were also issues which tended to be raised by candidates in boroughs (31%) rather than counties (14%).The franchise was less of an issue in 1874, being mentioned only by 18% of candidates. It is clear, however, that the major aspect had now, after the Ballot Act in 1872, become the extension of the borough franchise to the counties. The extension was generally argued for by Liberals and 22% of Liberal candidates mentioned the issue compared to only 13% of Conservatives. Those Conservatives who did mention the subject were cautious in their approach. Philip Twells, one of the Conservative candidates for the City of London, was representative of this when he stated:

> We have so recently had an extensive measure of electoral reform, that it does not appear to me politic at present to deal with such sweeping changes as would be involved in an extension of household suffrage to the counties.[37]

By the time of the 1880 election the campaign for the extension of the franchise in the counties had gained further momentum. However, the issue was still almost wholly discussed by Liberal candidates, with 34% mentioning it compared to only 3% of Conservatives. As might be expected, the issue was discussed more in the counties (22%) than in the boroughs (16%). Whilst the most common topic was the extension of the borough franchise to the counties, other issues in this category included the renewal of the provisions of the Ballot Act (which had only been originally passed with a life of ten years), the introduction of measures to deal with corruption, and the redistribution of electoral districts to create constituencies of more equal size. These issues were to see action from the incoming Liberal government in the 1883 Corrupt Practices Act and the 1884 Reform Acts.

Church of England

The question of the continued establishment of the Church of England was an issue at all three general elections. It was also a subject considerably more favoured by Conservative candidates. In 1868 it was often mentioned in connection with the question of Irish Church disestablishment with the implication that the Church of England could be next in line for such treatment. Thus, P. M. Egerton, returned

[37] Election address of Philip Twells, *Standard*, 30 January 1874.

unopposed as a Conservative for Cheshire West, referred to the 'insidious manoeuvres to undermine the Established Church and dissever it from State connection'.[38] Other Conservatives went further by joining the issue to the protection of the constitution. In 1874 disestablishment of the Church of England only appeared in 7% of Liberal election addresses, but was represented in 33% of Conservative messages. This demonstrates the negative scaremongering use to which the Conservatives put the issue in the southern English constituencies. Even more significant is the rhetoric they employed on this issue; for the Conservative language on the disestablishment issue frequently invoked nationalist and patriotic images. Sometimes the defence of the established church was bracketed with the defence of other institutions such as the monarchy and the House of Lords. As a consequence, Conservatives thought, the result of Gladstone's government had been to 'overthrow or undermine institutions previously held sacred and to disturb the settled institutions of the country both in Church and State'.[39] One candidate promised to 'support the institutions of the country - the Throne, the House of Lords, the union of Church and State, the Army and Navy, and the rights of the people', for the church was 'the Church of the people'.[40] Another was committed to 'preserve our Constitution and Liberties, to continue undisturbed the union of Church and State'.[41] The Church of England continued to be an issue at the 1880 election, albeit at a reduced level. It appeared in only 18% of addresses as compared to 34% in 1874. It had also by this time become an almost exclusively Conservative issue tied to their patriotic appeal to the defence of the established church and the constitution. Only 4% of Liberals mentioned the issue and some of these discussed it as radical proponents of disestablishment.

Taxation

In 1868 taxation appeared as an issue in 23% of addresses, and pledges to support the abolition of the malt tax appeared in 7%. Taxation as a generic title covered a wide range of issues covering such items as the abolition of the income tax, generalised pledges to reduce tax, reduction of income tax on trade and the abolition of various other indirect taxes.

The most frequently mentioned issue by far, however, was the representation of ratepayers in decisions on expenditure and the setting of rates in the counties. The

[38] Election address of P. M. Egerton, *Cheshire Observer*, 15 August 1868.
[39] Election address of L.R. Starkey, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 29 January 1874.
[40] Election address of Edward Green, *Leeds Mercury*, 28 January 1874.
[41] Election address of O. E. Coope, *Standard*, 30 January 1874.

local government of the counties was the most unrepresentative system in Great Britain. The 'august and powerful' Quarter Sessions of the magistrates, which assembled sometimes for judicial, sometimes for administrative business, levied a rate on the parishes which then collected this from the occupiers of land.[42] They were responsible for, inter alia, bridges, jails, the Militia, the prosecution of offenders, the police force and the coroner. The undemocratic nature of the Quarter Sessions was well expressed by John Stuart Mill who said:

> The mode of formation of these boards is most anomalous, they being neither elected, nor, in any proper sense of the term, nominated, but holding their important functions, like the feudal lords to whom they succeeded, virtually by right of their acres; the appointment vested in the Crown (or, speaking practically, in one of themselves, the lord lieutenant) being made use of only as a means of excluding any one who is thought would do discredit to the body, or, now and then, one who is on the wrong side in politics. The institution is the most aristocratic in principle which now remains in England; far more so than the House of Lords, for it grants public money and disposes of important public interests, not in conjunction with a popular assembly, but alone.[43]

In 1836 the Royal Commission on County Rates[44] had recognised that the ratepayers ought to have a voice in county business, and recommended the creation of County Councils, to include both elected members and magistrates, *ex officio*.[45] However, it was not until 1888 that successive governments were able to get Parliament to address this issue and the continuing problem was detrimental to a number of pieces of legislation in in the 1870s. Both Gladstone and Disraeli attempted to introduce measures to reform county government but withdrew in the face of strong resistance, especially from the Lords.[46]

The significant growth in public expenditure from 1870 to 1880 exacerbated the problem. County rates increased by 66% over this period whilst Treasury expenditure, which formed 20% of total expenditure, grew only 28%. These were as a result of constant calls for additional grants from Imperial taxation as well as for reductions in rates and greater representation in the determination of county rates and

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[42] B. Keith-Lucas, *English Local Government in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, (London, 1977), p. 7.
[43] John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, (London, 1861)
[44] *PP*, 1836, Report of the Commissioners for Inquiring into County Rates, and other matters connected therewith, (58).
[45] Keith-Lucas, *English Local Government*, p. 20.
[46] J. P. D. Dunbabin, 'The Politics of the Establishment of County Councils', *Historical Journal*, VI (1963), 226-252, p. 228.

expenditure.[47] Over 60% of the addresses in which the subject was mentioned were from candidates in county constituencies. In 1868, Arthur Pendarves Vivian, one of the unopposed Liberal members for Cornwall West, thought that 'the burden of Local Taxation has become very heavy', and he declared that he would 'advocate the adoption of such a system as will ensure the representation of the ratepayer by the establishment of County Financial Boards'.[48] The particular issue of the representation of local ratepayers in the counties was raised equally by members of either party. Notably, however, it seems to have been a particular issue in the south. Robert Gurden was an unsuccessful Liberal candidate for North Norfolk in 1868 and Norfolk South in 1871 and 1874, finally being elected for Norfolk South in 1880. His 1868 address aptly summarised the views expressed by many candidates on the question of local taxation, explaining that he would devote his attentions:

> To the removal of those burdens which press so heavily on the agriculturalist, and whether by a new adjustment of the law affecting real and personal property in the matter of rating, by the creation of financial boards or the extinction of the malt tax, I shall support to the best of my ability every measure which may appear to be calculated to lighten the present burdens of the tax payer, the proprietor, or the occupier of land.[49]

In 1874 taxation was by far the most frequently mentioned issue. Abolition of the income tax and reforms of other taxes were Gladstone's great surprises in his election manifesto, apart from the dissolution itself, and he hoped they would provide another 'great idea' to restore Liberal unity and provide an electoral rallying cry similar to 'justice for Ireland' through the proposals for the disestablishment of the Irish Church had done in 1868. The scheme for the abolition of income tax had been supported and motivated by the government's large expected financial surpluses and W. E. Forster, in a speech at Bradford on 26 January 1874, suggested the dissolution arose because the cabinet wished to consult the people on the propriety of applying the surplus to the income tax reduction. *The Times*, however, took a rather more cynical view, opining that the simple truth was 'the Ministry could stand the annoyance of repeated defeats no longer, and resolved to win the country by a sudden and wholesale offer to remit taxation'.[50] Whatever Gladstone's true motivations the cabinet approved his election

[47] B. R. Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, (Cambridge, 1971), p. 413; *PP*, 1881, County Rates(England) Abstract of the County Treasurers' Account. Year ended Lady Day 1880, (181).
[48] Election address of Arthur Pendarves Vivian, *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 6 August 1868.
[49] Election address of Robert Thornhagh Gurden, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8 September 1868.
[50] *The Times*, 27 January 1874.

address which proposed the 'relief, but relief coupled with reform, of local taxation', 'that the country may enjoy the advantage and relief of [the income tax's] total repeal' and 'some marked relief in the class of articles of popular consumption'. There was, therefore, something for everyone. However, by this point in his argument the Prime Minister had to concede that he had relieved more than the surplus he had available and parliament would have to look at 'what moderate assistance could be had from judicious adjustments of existing taxes', whilst admitting that these were 'general declarations' and the matter was for the moment 'one of confidence'.[51] These generalities set alarm bells ringing and gave the Conservatives the opportunity of accusing the government of planning increases in other property taxes. Disraeli claimed that the core proposals of the Prime Minister were those policies which the Conservative party had always favoured and which Gladstone had opposed. Disraeli was clear that these 'judicious adjustments' meant an 'increase of existing taxes'.[52] He also suggested that a Conservative administration could be better trusted to abolish the income tax and emphasised the need for local taxation reforms, an issue that resonated with many candidates and constituencies. Ghosh has persuasively argued that, by 1874, both Gladstone and Disraeli had reached similar positions, albeit by very different routes, in favour of low taxation and low spending.[53] As a result the similarity of positions taken by candidates of either party, which is particularly noticeable from campaign addresses and speeches, is perhaps not surprising and suggests that they were consistent in following the line of their leaders.[54] Plainly, in terms of the result, Gladstone's plan was a complete failure. Almost all candidates supported the proposal to abolish income tax and many Conservatives used the issue to make the reform of local rates a well-supported key topic; an opportunity which seems to have been missed by the government. Apart from the inability of the Liberals to distinguish themselves from the Conservatives on the taxation issue, it still remains an open question as to why Gladstone thought it would be electorally popular. It was with some justification that the *Economist* remarked that:

> Nothing can be much more surprising than that, just after a great extension of the suffrage to the poor – so great an extension indeed as to give the poor, should they

[51] Election address of W. E. Gladstone, *The Times*, 24 January 1874.
[52] Election address of Disraeli, *The Times*, 26 January 1874.
[53] P.R. Ghosh, 'Disraelian Conservatism: A Financial Approach', *English Historical Review*, 99 (1984), 268-296.
[54] See section III below.

> choose to use it, absolute sovereignty – the most popular measure for electioneering purposes should be the abolition of the income tax.[55]

In 1860 the proportion of adult males in English and Welsh parliamentary boroughs who paid income tax, and consequently had an income in excess of £100 per annum, was approximately 20%. This varied, of course, throughout the country from under 10% in the northern industrial towns such as Bolton, Bury and Stockport to areas of greater wealth in the south such as Cambridge (22%) and Brighton (23%).[56] Nevertheless, there was only a small proportion of the electorate who ever paid income tax during this period.

In 1880 taxation had ceased to be a major issue although many comments by candidates on local government, which often sought proper representation in the counties for the setting and collection of rates, also included references to the excessive nature of local taxation.

Foreign Policy

In 1868 the conduct of foreign policy was an issue discussed by nearly 19% of candidates. It tended to be mentioned marginally more often by Conservative candidates who accounted for 60% of instances. It was also an issue equally divided between southern and northern constituencies, and boroughs and counties. Fewer candidates (23.2%) mentioned foreign policy as an issue in 1874. Parry has argued that the government's lack of response to the Prussian victory over France in 1870 and the Alabama affair made the government seem weak in defending British national interests and the Conservatives took advantage of this. Although Disraeli had agreed with Gladstone's approach in relation to the Alabama, the Conservative's patriotic attack on these failures became bound up with the government's difficulties on education and the debate on secularism and disestablishment.[57] Defence of the Anglican Church accordingly became associated with defence of other national institutions as part of the attack on a government accused of weakness in foreign policy and the defence of Britain's national interests. This was reflected by Gathorne Hardy at a banquet given to mark his election as the Conservative member for Maidstone. In giving his opinion on the Liberal slogan of 'Peace, Retrenchment and Reform' he said Conservatives 'do not wish to obtain it [peace] by the sacrifice of honour', but, 'rather have it with the manly

[55] *Economist*, 31 January 1874, p. 125.
[56] Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, pp. 35-36.
[57] Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, particularly pp. 308-311.

dignity that becomes a great nation'[58]In 1880 foreign policy was the dominant issue of the election, appearing in aggregate in 85.1% of all addresses. The commentary on the Conservative government's conduct of foreign policy was split almost completely on party lines. Conservative candidates' support for the government's policy used language which frequently involved both manly and patriotic terms. To some extent Beaconsfield had chosen to respond to the challenge to his foreign policy, noting in his own address that the 'ineffable blessing' of peace could not be 'obtained by the passivity of non-interference' for peace 'rests on the presence, not to say the ascendancy of England in the councils of Europe'.[59] Foreign policy debates provided particularly fertile ground for the use of patriotic appeals and this issue is discussed further below. In addition, foreign policy was a dominant issue at by-elections in the later 1870s and this subject is discussed in Chapter V.

Land

Issues concerning land covered a number of topics. The most commonly raised was the law relating to the sale and transfer of land including primogeniture and strict settlement, and the more general reform of the cumbersome land transfer system. Compensation for tenants' improvements and the game laws were also frequently mentioned issues directed at the smaller tenant farmer. Questions relating to the ownership of land, the rights to game, agricultural wages and similar issues were well established in British politics by the late 1860s. However, in the 1850s and 1860s they had not been at the forefront of political debate.[60] This tends to be confirmed by the experience of the 1868 general election when there were very few references to the issue in candidates' addresses. F.H. Muntz, one of the Liberal candidates in Birmingham, was an exception in calling for an 'alteration of the Laws of Primogeniture and Entail' but there were few other references to the issue.[61]

By the time of the 1874 general election, however, the issue had moved up the political agenda. Over 28% of candidates mentioned the issue in their addresses for the 1874 election. The cause at this time was strikingly a Liberal one with nearly 45% of Liberal candidates mentioning the issue compared to only 2 % of Conservatives. This perhaps suggests that the 1874 election saw the development of a set of issues which

[58] *Daily News*, 16 February1874.
[59] Election address of Beaconsfield, *Bury Post*, 16 March 1880.
[60] Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman *The Land Question in Britain, 1750 – 1950*, (London, 2010), pp. 1 – 18.
[61] Election address of F. H. Muntz, *Birmingham Post*, 1 September 1868.

were subsequently to become an important part of the Liberal platform. Edgar Bowring, the Liberal candidate at Exeter, succinctly summarised the issue at hand for many Liberals when he stated:

> The Land Laws of this country appear to …. demand important alteration in three respects. We must give the occupiers greater security of tenure than they now possess; we must cheapen and facilitate the transfer of land, and we must review the laws of Primogeniture and Entail. The abolition of the Game Laws in their present form appears to me to be imperatively called for, in the interests of the tenant farmers equally with those of the community at large.[62]

The formation of Mill's Land Tenure Reform Association also gave impetus to the development of the issue at this time.

The politics of land continued to be an increasingly important issue in British elections and received some impetus when the publication of and the debate on the *Return on the Owners of Land* brought into the open the concentration of the ownership of land in Britain.[63] Rather curiously, however, in 1880 the issue did not achieve particularly greater prominence than in 1874 with mentions by 49% of Liberal candidates in 1880 compared to 45% in 1874. There were, however, in 1880, far more references to land issues made by candidates in county constituencies (although 25% continued to be made in the boroughs). As in previous elections the issue was prioritised by the Liberals and over two thirds of the time the issue was mentioned by a Liberal candidate. The nature of the references by Conservative candidates tended to be non-committal or to support the legislation introduced by the Conservative government in 1875. This legislation, the Agricultural Holdings Act, had provided for a form of lease for tenant farmers which would give compensation for improvements if the lease was terminated but was widely criticised for being only voluntary. One Conservative candidate in Cornwall did go as far as advocating that the requirements be made compulsory but still lost.[64] More typically Conservative candidates tended to be patronisingly vague especially in rural constituencies where the issue could assume more direct importance. Henry Scott, a Conservative who was returned unopposed for Hampshire South, thought that the next government should suggest some measures

[62] Election address of Edgar A. Bowring, *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 28 January 1874.
[63] *PP*, 1876, Summary of Returns of the Ownership of Land in England, Wales and Scotland, (335).
[64] Election address of John Tremayne, *Royal Cornwall Gazette Falmouth Packet, Cornish Weekly News, & General Advertiser*, 2 April 1880.

aimed at 'removing such restrictions as may be found to exist in the profitable cultivation of land'.[65]

Sir Frederick Winn Knight was a Conservative member for Worcestershire West in 1868, 1874 and 1880 and described himself in his address as 'one of the largest occupiers of land in the South of England. His address consisted almost entirely of issues relating to the land including the agricultural depression, a commendation of the Contagious Diseases Animals Act of 1872 and the commendation of the Agricultural Holdings Act which he had adopted on his own property. He finally pronounced himself in favour of 'a well-considered revision of the Game Laws' which would give fair compensation to Tenants for damage done by Game'.[66]

Wales

Table III/4 shows the top six issues contained in candidates' addresses in Welsh constituencies in each general election. For comparative purposes, the ranking of each issue in Britain as a whole is also shown.

Table III-4 Analysis of Issues – Wales

Election	**Top six issues**					
1868	Irish Church	Education	Economy	Reform Act	Tax	Local connections
GB Ranking of Issue	1	2	3	4	7	-
1874	Education	Local taxation	Land law	Religious liberty	Record	Drinking
GB Ranking of Issue	2	1	5	-	3	-
1880	Foreign policy	Record	Depression	Religious liberty	Burials	Drinking
GB Ranking of Issue	1	5	4	-	13	7
Sources and notes: Candidates' addresses. The total candidates were 1868:49; 1874:55; 1880:54. The addresses examined were 1868:16; 1874:34; 1880:37. A summary of the issues is shown in Tables III/1 to III/3.						

In Wales the issues discussed by candidates in the 1868 election were almost the same as those discussed in Great Britain as a whole. The four most frequently mentioned topics were exactly the same as in Great Britain. Local connections were more

[65] Election address of Henry J Scott, *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 27 March 1880.
[66] Election address of Sir Frederick Winn Knight, *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 March 1880.

frequently mentioned but there were very few references to what might be regarded as specifically Welsh issues, the only notable reference being the issue of land ownership by nonconformists. Morgan Lloyd, the unsuccessful Liberal candidate for the Beaumaris District of Boroughs, noted that 'the state of the law as regards the holding of real property by Dissenters, and the acquisition of building sites for their Chapels, is eminently unsatisfactory'.[67] Nevertheless, this issue was mentioned by only one other candidate.

The conformity with national issues was reflected in the campaign speeches of candidates. For instance, Watkins Williams, the successful Liberal candidate for the Denbigh District of Boroughs, addressed the Wrexham Working Man's Liberal Association and took the opportunity to devote almost his whole speech to the Irish Church question.[68] His Conservative opponent, Townshend Mainwaring, subsequently spoke at a town meeting at which almost all the speeches and debate were confined to the question of Ireland and the disestablishment of the Irish Church.[69] Indeed, a notable feature of Liberal addresses in 1868 was the degree of support given to the disestablishment of the Irish Church. The issue was mentioned by 81% of candidates, more than in any other part of Great Britain. The language used by some Liberal candidates also suggests they were prepared to draw a parallel between the position of Irish Catholics and Welsh nonconformists. Cragoe has suggested that this meant that for the Welsh radicals, for the first time, '"Wales" itself had become an issue in Welsh politics'. In 1874 the pattern of issues discussed by candidates is similar to those in England. There were, however, some distinct differences. The abolition of income tax and taxation issues in general were not in the top six issues in Wales in 1874. Issues connected to Welsh non-conformism also continued to surface so that references to religious freedom and equality were more common than in England. There were also several references to Osborne Morgan's Burials Bill which sought to give dissenters the right to burial in parish church-yards.

1880 saw foreign policy as the most important issue in Wales, as it was in England. There were few distinctly Welsh issues although religious liberty and burial rights continued to be mentioned. It is noteworthy that Ireland appears to have failed to engage the Welsh candidates with just a few Conservatives mentioning their

[67] Election address of Morgan Lloyd, *North Wales Chronicle*, 7 November 1868.
[68] Speech by Watkin Williams, *Wrexham Advertiser*, 3 October 1868.
[69] Speech by Townshend Mainwaring, *Wrexham Advertiser*, 17 October 1868.

opposition to Home Rule. [70] Indeed, Welsh electors were never to have much interest in the disestablishment of the Irish church or in home rule as issues in themselves.

Scotland

Table III/5 shows the top six issues contained in candidates' addresses in Scottish constituencies in each general election. For comparative purposes, the ranking of each issue in Britain as a whole is also shown.

Table III-5 Analysis of Issues – Scotland

Election	**Top six issues**					
1868	Irish Church	Education	Economy	Reform Act	Foreign policy	Record
GB Ranking of Issue	1	2	3	4	8	9
1874	Game Laws	Land law	Franchise extension	Church	Local Tax	Education
GB Ranking of Issue	11	7	6	5	3	2
1880	Land	Foreign Policy	Church	Hypothec	Disestablishment	Drinking
GB Ranking of Issue	3	1	-	15	10	7
Sources and notes: Candidates' addresses. The total candidates were 1868:89; 1874:99; 1880:102. The addresses examined were 1868:11; 1874:35; 1880:48. A summary of the issues is shown in Tables III/1 to III/3.						

In 1868 Scottish candidates dealt with almost exactly the same issues as their English and Welsh counterparts. There were, however, some references to the Game Laws and the uniquely Scottish issue of hypothec. The Conservatives had steadily lost seats in the Scottish counties in 1865 and 1868 as they received the dissatisfaction of tenant farmers concerned with these issues.[71] The disestablishment of the Irish Church was the most frequently mentioned issue both nationally and in Scotland where it tended to be supported by Liberals and opposed by Conservatives. Conservative objectives were different since no issue over threats to the established church, instead they thought

[70] Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity*, pp. 68-73.
[71] Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland*, pp. 104-105; Ewen A. Cameron, 'Setting the Heather on Fire: The Land Question in Scotland, 1850-1914', in Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman (eds), *The Land Question in Britain, 1750-1950*, (Basingstoke, 2010), 109-125, pp. 116-117.

disestablishment unfair or that it would promote the growth of Catholicism in Scotland.

In 1874 Scotland had different priorities in the ranking of issues compared to England and Wales. Amendments to the game laws, the law of hypothec (the right of Scottish landlords to take security over crops and livestock) and the extension of the franchise were by far the most important issues in Scottish candidates' addresses. Almost all candidates of all political persuasions were in favour of the abolition of hypothec and amendments to the game laws. The references in this table to the church refer to the disestablishment of the Church of Scotland and the healing of the great divide. Land again dominated Scottish issues in 1880, despite hypothec being classified separately as an issue, even pushing foreign policy into second place.[72] Disestablishment continued to be raised by some candidates but was declining as an issue.[73]

Locality

Of course, election addresses were only one way in which candidates sought to make their views and opinions known to electors, and they were a particularly abbreviated method of doing this. The other major means of communication from candidates to electors during the 1870s was the formal speech. The circumstances in which politicians made their speeches ranged from major public occasions which could be attended by many thousands to small local addresses. The audiences could be party workers or party supporters; or else the speeches could be open to the general public. Crucially, from the beginning of the period, they were reported, usually verbatim in the newspapers. As a result speeches became as much directed at their publication in the newspapers as they were to the audience to whom they were delivered. As we have seen in the Introduction the spread of and the massive growth of the newspaper industry became an important factor in the nationalisation of politics in this period. As was shown in that discussion it meant, for instance, that a speech made by a major politician in Manchester could be breakfast reading for Cornish electors the following day.[74] These developments had a fundamental impact in creating the primacy of national issues in political debate and in leading to the consistency of political language across Great Britain. This was equally true of candidates' election addresses.

[72] Dyer, *Men of Property*, p. 141.
[73] Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland*, pp. 143-148.
[74] These points are extensively covered in Matthew, 'Rhetoric and Politics in Great Britain'34-58. See also Meisel, *Public Speech and the Culture of Public Life in the Age of Gladstone* and Readman, 'Speeches'.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the issues and language used by candidates in their election addresses were totally consistent with those used in their campaign speeches. This is demonstrated by a comparison of the keynote speeches and addresses given by a selection of candidates which showed complete consistency in terms of content and language. It also tends to suggest that candidates' addresses are a valid and particularly useful way of understanding the issues and language which were given such widespread distribution across the country. It also means that the consistency of content of candidates' addresses is good evidence for the nationalisation of politics in this period and for the rapid decline of the importance of local issues and influences on electoral outcomes.

This view of the national nature of electoral politics in Great Britain from 1868 onwards is by no means universally accepted. Hanham remarked that the general elections contested by Gladstone and Disraeli were not general for 'only about half the seats were contested by both parties, and even where both parties were in the field with the same number of candidates local or regional or "national" issues tended to be as important as those which agitated the three kingdoms'.[75] Chapter II and Appendix I explain Hanham's mistake in regarding the failure to field candidates, either at all or in numbers less than the seats available, as indicative of the lack of generality of elections. So far as concerns the nature of issues, it is difficult to be certain of what Hanham meant in contrasting national issues with those 'which agitated the three kingdoms'. He surely cannot have meant that for elections to be regarded as 'general' in some modern sense, there needed to be the same issues debated in Ireland as in Great Britain. Election debates in Ireland throughout this period were dominated by the issues of home rule, land reform and education. In Great Britain, however, candidates' addresses show clearly that the most frequently discussed issues did tend to 'agitate' constituencies in all of England, Scotland and Wales. As has been shown, whilst there may have been differences of emphasis between the countries in Great Britain, but the portfolio of issues dominating the election debates was essentially the same. The analysis below shows that the same was also true of different regions in England.

More recent developments in historical approaches to electoral politics have emphasised the 'importance of locality, or the 'politics of place' in influencing

[75] Hanham, *Elections*, p. 191

electoral behaviour into the twentieth century'.[76] Other historical studies have focussed on the unique characteristics of individual constituencies and the importance of local influences in explaining electoral outcomes.[77] The analysis of candidates' addresses offers an opportunity to test these assertions particularly the hypothesis that local issues were much more important than the strength of any national issue. To do this the sample of candidates' addresses was further examined to determine if there were any issues which were unique to particular regions and if there was any apparent difference in the importance attached to issues according to the region in which the constituency was located. For these purposes the English constituencies were classified by the regions used by Pelling in his Social Geography of British Election 1885 – 1910, which were in their turn based upon those identified by Fawcett.[78] Pelling, of course, conducted his analysis using the constituencies resulting from the 1885 redistribution and for the purposes of this exercise the constituencies existing for the three general elections of the period have been traced through to the 1885 redistribution and have then been allocated to Pelling's regions. As discussed previously, issues were ranked according to frequency with which they appeared in the addresses. This method can only be a crude indicator of what candidates thought were the more important issues and this factor may account for some of the variation between regions. However, the striking consistency of the results across the regions suggests that it is not wide of the mark. The following tables show the top four, ranked on this basis, of the issues mentioned in candidates' addresses in each of these regions for each of the three general elections.

[76] Taylor, 'Electoral sociology', p. 17.
[77] For example see Lawrence, *Speaking*, Elliott, 'Parliamentary Election Results', Roberts, '"Villa Toryism"'.
[78] Pelling, *Social Geography*, C. B. Fawcett, *Provinces of England*, (London, 1919). According to Pelling 'Fawcett drew his regional boundaries on the basis of the 1911 census, so they reflect the pattern of life at the time. Each region had to be, so far as possible, self-contained from the point of view of residence and occupation, that is to say, there had to be a minimum of daily movement of population across its boundaries. Each region also had to have a fairly obvious urban centre, and had to be of a reasonable size – in fact, the smallest region , the Peak-Don region as he called it, had a population of over a million in 1911'. Pelling, *Social Geography*, pp. 3-4.

Table III-6 Regional Analysis of Issues – 1868

Region	**Top four issues**			
Bristol	Economy	Reform Act	Church of England	Irish Church
Central	Irish Church	Church of England	Economy	Tax
Cornwall	Reform Act	Irish Church	Education	Ballot
Devon	Record	Irish Church	Tax	Church of England
East Anglia	Irish Church	Tax	Education	Malt Tax
East Midlands	Irish Church	Education	Reform Act	Church of England
Lincoln	†			
London	Irish Church	Economy	Reform Act	Tax
Lancastria	Economy	Education	Irish Church	Bankruptcy
North	Church of England	Ballot	Irish Church	Tax
Peak Don	Irish Church	Education	Economy	Church of England
South East Boroughs	Irish Church	Education	Economy	Church of England
Greater London	Irish Church	Tax	Education	Reform Act
South East Rural	Irish Church	Tax	Economy	Reform Act
Wessex	Irish Church	Education	Tax	Economy
West Midlands	Irish Church	Education	Ballot	Economy
Yorkshire	Irish Church	Education	Economy	Ballot
Sources and notes: Candidates' addresses. A summary of the issues is shown in Tables III/1 to III/3. † There were no candidates' addresses available for this region.				

As may be seen from the table there was a remarkable degree of consistency in the issues discussed in 1868 and regarded as most important in each region. In the top four issues only nine issues were mentioned over all of the regions, and two of these issues relating to the abolition of the Malt Tax and the reform of the Bankruptcy laws were mentioned only once. The pervasiveness of the issue of the disestablishment of the Irish Church also perhaps indicates Gladstone's success in setting the agenda for the 1868 election. There are some discernible regional variations, in particular the issue of taxation tended to be mentioned by candidates in the south. It seems clear that in 1868 there were no significant differences in the key issues in each region.

Table III-7 Regional Analysis of Issues – 1874

Region	**Top four issues**			
Bristol	Education	Church of England	Local Taxation	Religious Liberty
Central	†			
Cornwall	†			
Devon	Education	Income tax	Church of England	Foreign Policy
East Anglia	Religious Liberty	Land Law	Local Taxation	Income Tax
East Midlands	Education	Church of England	Income tax	Local Taxation
Lincoln	Income Tax	Indirect Taxation	Game Laws	Land Law
London	Income Tax	Local Taxation	Education	Religious Liberty
Lancastria	Income Tax	Indirect tax	Religious Liberty	Free Trade
North	Church of England	Income Tax	Local Taxation	Education
Peak Don	Church of England	Income Tax	Local Taxation	Education
South East Boroughs	Education	Income Tax	Church of England	Local Taxation
Greater London	Income Tax	Education	Religious Liberty	Local Taxation
South East Rural	Education	Income Tax	Local Taxation	Land Law
Wessex	Education	Income Tax	Religious Liberty	Foreign policy
West Midlands	Income Tax	Local Taxation	Education	Ballot
Yorkshire	Income Tax	Church of England	Education	Religious Liberty
Sources and notes: Candidates' addresses. A summary of the issues is shown in Tables III/1 to III/3. † There were no candidates' addresses available for these regions.				

Similarly to 1868, the issues raised in the 1874 general election show a remarkable degree of consistency across the regions. Only 11 issues cover the 72 possibilities and of these, the references to franchise reform and the amendment of the game laws are mentioned only once.

The pervasiveness of Gladstone's proposal to abolish income tax once again shows his success at setting the agenda for elections, although in 1874 this was less than successful.

Table III-8 Regional Analysis of Issues – 1880

Region	**Top four issues**			
Bristol	Foreign Policy	Depression	Record	Local government
Central	Foreign Policy	Record	Depression	Drinking
Cornwall	Foreign Policy	Drinking		Ireland Criticism
Devon	Foreign Policy	Depression	Drinking	Local government
East Anglia	Depression	Foreign Policy	Record	Local government
East Midlands	Foreign Policy	Land Law	Local government	Drinking
Lincoln	Foreign Policy	Depression	Local government	Ireland Criticism
London	Foreign Policy	Record	Ireland Criticism	Drinking
Lancastria	Foreign Policy	Record	Drinking	Land Law
North	Foreign Policy	Land Law	Ireland Criticism	Franchise Extension
Peak Don	Foreign Policy	Local government	Land Law	Record
South East Boroughs	Foreign Policy	Record		
Greater London	Foreign Policy	Franchise Extension	Ireland Criticism	Record
South East Rural	Foreign Policy	Depression	Franchise Extension	Ireland Criticism
Wessex	Foreign Policy	Local government	Land Law	Local government
West Midlands	Foreign Policy	Land Law	Local government	Depression
Yorkshire	Foreign Policy	Land Law	Franchise Extension	Ireland Criticism
Sources and notes: Candidates' addresses. A summary of the issues is shown in Tables III/1 to III/3.				

The 1880 analysis shows a similar pattern to the previous two general elections with a marked lack of variation in issues across the regions. Remarkably, foreign policy was regarded by candidates as the most important issue in all but one of the regions; and in East Anglia, where it was not ranked first, it was regarded as the second most important issue. This is, perhaps, not so surprising when it is recalled that foreign policy was an issue on which both parties had strong, if opposed, views at the

1880 election. Similarly to previous elections, although the order of importance of different issues varied across the regions only eight different issues covered the entire range of 72 different possibilities. Similarly, an analysis of the next four most important issues in each region reveals a similar pattern with essentially the same issues arising in each region with small variations in the degree of importance attached to each one. These analyses provide persuasive evidence that there were no major issues which were confined to particular regions and that there was very little variation in the importance of issues on a national and regional basis.

The conclusions that may be reached on the importance of individual constituency issues are even starker, for the evidence suggests that they may have been very little significance. Of the nearly 1000 addresses reviewed over the three elections only 20 contained an issue which was unique to the constituency to whose electors it was addressed. At the same time, as is readily apparent from the analysis of the issues at each general election, there was a variation in those issues which candidates thought were important. The nearest approach to total coverage came in the 1880 general election when the issue of foreign policy appeared in one form or another in over 85% of candidates' addresses. More generally at the three general elections the most frequently discussed issues appeared in 20%-40% of addresses but this did not mask a large number of subsidiary issues. It simply reflected the fact that not all candidates mentioned every issue but this selectivity was a reflection of the political judgement of the individual candidate rather than the locality of the constituency.

III The party leaders' addresses

The addresses issued by the party leaders received a great deal of contemporary attention and were regarded as official statements of party policy. They were published in full in many newspapers, both national and regional, and played a critical role in setting the agenda for the election campaign and in providing key messages that would be adopted by the candidates. The importance of the leader's message was also established at the 1868 general election when the Liberal central organisation printed and widely circulated copies of Gladstone's first campaign speech setting out the key themes of the campaign.[79] The subsequent addresses of Disraeli and Gladstone were

[79] Thompson, 'Gladstone's whips', p.197.

described as manifestos.[80] Disraeli's address was issued from Downing Street on 1st October 1868 to the electors of Buckinghamshire, and as the *Standard* noted, through them to the United Kingdom.[81] The *Standard* regarded it as 'a statepaper' and a 'manifesto of policy'.[82] *The Times* thought he had given 'the Conservative account of political affairs'.[83] Gladstone's response addressed to the electors of South West Lancashire came on 8 October 1868 and was greeted with similar comments on its importance, *The Times* devoting a three column leader to an analysis of the relative positions of the two leaders.[84]

The importance attached to the leader's address as a statement of party policy was again shown by the way in which Gladstone and Disraeli prepared their addresses in 1874. Gladstone's address was technically to the electors of Greenwich but a full cabinet meeting was held on Friday 23 January 1874 for its consideration and approval. The meeting made some amendments and it was agreed that there would be absolute secrecy as to its contents that evening. Gladstone then promptly leaked it to *The Times* so that it could be carried in full in the Saturday morning edition of the paper along with the shock news of the dissolution. [85] Disraeli, caught off guard by Gladstone's surprise announcement, immediately summoned Gathorne Hardy and the Earl of Derby to London to assist in drafting his own address which he got into Monday's newspapers.[86]

The status of the leaders' addresses as statements of party policy and their importance to candidates of both parties is also clearly shown by the remarkable correspondence between the issues raised by Gladstone and Disraeli in their own addresses at each of the three elections and the frequency with which these issues were mentioned by the candidates of their parties. The tables below show the issues raised by each of the party leaders in their addresses for each of the elections and the frequency with which they were mentioned by the candidates of their own parties.

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[80] See for instance the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 12 March 1880, where Gladstone's address was referred to as 'Mr Gladstone's Electoral Manifesto'. In 1874, Thomas Frost, the Liberal candidate at Chester, referred to 'the manifesto of our great leader – Mr. Gladstone'. *Cheshire Observer*, 31 January 1874.
[81] *London Standard*, 3 October 1868.
[82] Ibid, 3 October 1868.
[83] *The Times*, 5 October 1868.
[84] Ibid, 12 October 1868.
[85] Matthew, *The Gladstone Diaries*, p. 447; Hanham, *Elections*; H. J. Hanham, 'Political Patronage at the Treasury, 1870-1912', *Historical Journal*, 3 (1960), 75-84.
[86] Richard Aldous, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Gladstone vs Disraeli*, (London, 2007), p. 241.

Table III-9 Gladstone and the addresses of Liberal candidates

Issues raised by Gladstone in his address	*Percentage of Liberal candidates mentioning the issue*
1868	
Irish Church	74%
Education	50%
Economy	43%
Reform Act	37%
Record	14%
1874	
Income Tax	74%
Record	65%
Land Law	34%
Local Taxation	29%
Education	25%
Drinking	8%
Foreign Policy	7%
1880	
Foreign policy moral	56%
Land	35%
Franchise extension	34%
Ireland	37%
Economy	30%
Record	21%
Local government	19%
Sources and notes: Election addresses of Gladstone to the electors of Lancashire, South West (1868), Greenwich (1874) and Midlothian (1880). Statistics for the Liberal candidates are taken from Tables III/1, III/2 and III/3 above. The issues are ordered according to the frequency with which they were mentioned by Liberal candidates. They may have been referred to in a different order in the addresses of Gladstone and individual candidates.	

Table III-10 Disraeli and the addresses of Conservative candidates

Issues raised by Disraeli	*Percentage of Conservative candidates mentioning the issue*
1868	
Irish Church	58%
Reform Act	31%
Economy	27%
Foreign policy	22%
Reference to predecessor – Earl of Derby	nil
1874	
Education	46%
Income Tax	36%
Church of England	33%
Franchise extension	12%
Gladstone, constitutional law and the dissolution	Nil
1880	
Foreign policy strength	64%
Ireland Criticisms	31%
Sources and notes: Election addresses of Disraeli to the electors of Buckinghamshire (1868 and 1874) and his published letter to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1880). Statistics for the Conservative candidates are taken from Tables III/1, III/2 and III/3 above. The issues are ordered according to the frequency with which they were mentioned by Liberal candidates. They may have been referred to in a different order in the addresses of Disraeli and individual candidates.	

It can be seen that in 1868 Liberal candidates fairly solidly followed Gladstone with his top four issues being the same as those adopted by the Liberal candidates. Prospective Liberal members did show some independence with 30% mentioning further electoral reform through the introduction of the ballot and the extension of the borough franchise to the counties and 21% raising issues concerning taxation. Conservatives were similar in the way they followed Disraeli although a little less consistently. The issues raised by Disraeli were all in the top six of those mentioned by Conservative candidates. They also mentioned the threat to the Church of England presented by the disestablishment of the Irish Church (34%) and education (34%). The latter point suggesting that the battle lines were already being drawn over the religious aspects of any future legislation on education.

Disraeli had some justification when he called Gladstone's 1874 address a 'prolix narrative'; running at over 4,000 words it was quite the longest of any leader in

the three general elections between 1868 and 1880, and probably of any candidate. Nevertheless, most Liberals followed their leader and there were no major issues referred to by Liberal candidates which were not also covered by Gladstone in his comprehensive address. Conservatives as well adopted a strong party line with the key issues referred to by candidates all following Disraeli except for opposition to temperance laws which was addressed by 16% of Conservatives but not mentioned by their leader.

In 1880 matters were rather more complicated by the status of each of the main protagonists. Beaconsfield sat in the House of Lords and by constitutional convention of the time was precluded from dealing 'otherwise than indirectly' with the approaching appeal to the electorate.[87] As Premier he decided upon the date of the dissolution, which came as a complete surprise to almost everyone, and was, therefore, able to issue his manifesto on the same day as the announcement of the election. In view of his constitutional position and perhaps reflecting his desire to make Ireland the key issue of the election, his manifesto was produced in the form of a letter to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and, of course, was simultaneously released to the press. Whatever the constitutional niceties it was treated as the Conservative manifesto and was reproduced in full in most principal national and regional newspapers. The Conservatives were led in the Commons by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Northcote, and at the same time his address to his constituents in North Devon received considerable publicity as a second official manifesto for the Conservative party.[88] On the Liberal side, after his Midlothian campaign, Gladstone's address was given much attention; it was, as the *Birmingham Daily Post* put it, 'Mr Gladstone's electoral manifesto'.[89] However, the Leader of the Opposition was Lord Hartington and his address to his constituency electorate was given national attention in the same way as Northcote's. The following tables show the issues raised by Hartington and Northcote in their addresses compared to the frequency with which those issues were mentioned by Liberal and Conservative candidates respectively.

[87] *Morning Post*, 11 March 1880 p. 8.
[88] *Morning Post*, 11 March 1880.
[89] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 March 1880.

Table III-11 Hartington and the addresses of Liberal candidates

Issues raised by Hartington	*Percentage of Liberal candidates mentioning the issue*
1880	
Foreign policy moral	56%
Land	35%
Franchise Extension	34%
Economy	30%
Ireland Criticisms	23%
Local government	19%
Sources and notes: Election address of Hartington to the electors of Lancashire, North East. Statistics for the Conservative candidates are taken from Tables III/1, III/2 and III/3 above. The issues are ordered according to the frequency with which they were mentioned by Liberal candidates. They may have been referred to in a different order in the addresses of Hartington and individual candidates.	

Table III-12 Northcote and the addresses of Liberal candidates

Issues raised by Northcote	*Percentage of Conservative candidates mentioning the issue*
1880	
Foreign policy strength	65%
Ireland	31%
Economy	11%
Sources and notes: Election address of Northcote to the electors of Devon, North. Statistics for the Conservative candidates are taken from Tables III/1, III/2 and III/3 above. The issues are ordered according to the frequency with which they were mentioned by Conservative candidates. They may have been referred to in a different order in the addresses of Northcote and individual candidates.	

It may be seen from these tables and those relating to Gladstone and Disraeli that the issues raised by the party leaders were also followed with some frequency by the candidates of their parties. There were also some issues which were popular with candidates but were not mentioned by the leaders. Liberal candidates gave additional emphasis to subjects such as temperance, local government and taxation and burial rights for nonconformists. Conservatives also mentioned the economic depression and the Church of England. Substantially, however, there was broad agreement between the leaders and their candidates.

Apart from its constitutional status, Beaconsfield's 1880 manifesto proved to be somewhat unusual compared to prior elections. It was relatively short and focussed

solely on Ireland and foreign policy with the greater attention given to Ireland. It may be read as an attempt to make Home Rule the key issue of the election (which perhaps explains why only 1% of Liberals mentioned Ireland as an issue) and it sought to relate weakness toward Ireland with weakness in foreign policy. He said:

> There are some who challenge the expediency of the Imperial character of this realm. Having attempted, and failed, to enfeeble our colonies by their policy of decomposition, they may perhaps now recognise in the disintegration of the UK a mode which will not only accomplish, but precipitate, their purpose.[90]

Many Conservatives followed him with 65% mentioning foreign policy and 31% Ireland. Northcote's address was relatively short compared to others but was consistent with that of his leader except that he included considerably more on the nation's finances as might be expected from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Gladstone's 1880 address was also unusual because, by his standards, it was relatively brief. Hartington on the other hand seemed to respond to his official position as leader of the party, by issuing an address of great length which was certainly more expansive than Gladstone's. There was no great disagreement, however, and they broadly covered the same territory.

It is apparent, therefore, that contemporaries, both politicians and the media, regarded the party leader's address of significant importance in the context of general elections. They were regarded, certainly by the press, as a statement of party policy, and the consistency with which candidates followed their leader suggests that by now the leader's address was firmly considered to be the party manifesto.

IV The appeal to patriotism

Patriotic language was extremely important to the discourse of electoral politics during the period. We have seen in the preceding sections that issues such as the preservation of the established church, foreign policy, education and the governance of Ireland were amongst the important issues at all three general elections. Candidates frequently couched their statements on these matters in language which appealed to patriotic beliefs. For example, Conservatives frequently used this language in their defences of the established church. A good illustration of this was the address of Henry Raikes, the Conservative candidate at Chester, who said:

[90] *Bury Post*, 16 March 1880.

> I cannot but anticipate serious danger to the Church of England as well as to our other Protestant Institutions, possibly even a shock to the rights of all property, from such a step as it has been proposed to take with regard to the Church of Ireland.[91]

Equally, Liberals could also use such language, for example at the 1880 general election Liberals frequently criticised the government's treatment of Parliament as 'underhand' in their pursuit of their pro-Turkish policy.[92] This was exemplified by Samuel Plimsoll, a Liberal candidate at Derby, who said of this behaviour that the government had 'unpatriotically sought to undermine the authority of Parliament'. As a result there have been a number of questions which have arisen concerning the use and efficacy of patriotism in electoral politics. The style and content of election addresses can provide a useful means of shedding some more light on these points but, in order to do this, it is necessary to clarify some matters important to this debate. Firstly, it is important to observe that patriotism without content is a vacuous proposition. Patriotism as love of country or patrie simply begs the question of what is meant by country or patrie in each circumstance and what exactly is loveable about it. To have any significant content or appeal patriotism has to be underpinned by a concept of nation but it is equally true that this could vary significantly between politicians - so that patriotic appeals could be expressed in very different languages with very different underlying concepts of nation. This question of the content of patriotic appeals points to a second issue because once it is recognised that there can be very different forms of patriotism, expressed in very different languages, then it becomes apparent that these appeals could be used by both parties. Parry and others have shown that the Conservative employment of nationalistic language and appeals to patriotism as a central part of the Conservative message to the new working-class electorate were not the exclusive preserve of that party and these appeals could be frequently used by Liberals.[93] For example, Paul Readman has noted that from the late 1870s to the outbreak of war in 1914 'non-Conservative languages of patriotism not

[91] *Cheshire Observer*, 8 August 1868.
[92] Lloyd, *The General Election of 1880*, p. 43.
[93] J. P. Parry, 'The Impact of Napoleon III on British Politics, 1851-1880', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 11 (2001), 147-175, pp. 173-175; Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, pp. 276-386; Readman, 'Patriotism and the Politics of Foreign Policy'. For the Conservative appeal see, for example: Cunningham, *British Public Opinion and the Eastern Question*; Cunningham, 'Language of Patriotism'; Hugh Cunningham, 'The Conservative Party and Patriotism', in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (eds), *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, (Beckenham, 1986), 283-307; Philip Lewis Lynch, 'British Conservatism and the Concept of the Nation', (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 1992).

only existed, but could at times exert at least a strong a pull as their Conservative counterparts'.[94]

Finally, Cunningham famously argued in his article in the *History Workshop Journal* that the Conservatives 'stole the language of patriotism from Palmerstonian Liberalism for the Conservative party, through his bold foreign initiatives'.[95] He identified the timing of this transition with considerable historical precision: 'The decisive shift came suddenly in the space of few months in late 1877 and early 1878. The occasion was the Eastern Question'.[96] This appeal, he argued, was a jingoistic plea based on the strength of the Conservatives' foreign policy and it was associated with the defence and celebration of the Empire together with the notion of imperialism. There has been considerable discussion as to whether such imperialistic appeals were at all worthwhile and whether the electorate, particularly its working-class element had any interest or paid any attention to the Empire and its related issues.[97]

Examination of candidates' addresses for the three general elections throws additional light on these issues in a number of interesting ways. Firstly, it provides an insight into the nature of the patriotic language that was used by the parties. The most frequently used Conservative appeals during the period were based on the patriotic virtue of protecting the historical protestant settlement, the constitution and all the institutions of England and its Empire. The emergence of this usage can be clearly seen in the Conservative approaches to the questions of the disestablishment of the Irish Church and religious instruction in state supported educational institutes which were such important issues in the 1868 and 1874 general elections. The language used in addresses also tends to confirm the existence of non-Conservative languages of patriotism and indeed a robust Liberal language of patriotism came to the fore in the

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[94] Readman, 'Patriotism and the Politics of Foreign Policy', p. 261.
[95] Cunningham, 'Language of Patriotism'; the quotation is from Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, p. 324.
[96] Cunningham, 'Language of Patriotism', p. 22.
[97] See for example: Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Phillips, *History, nationhood, and the question of Britain*, (Basingstoke, 2004); P. Ward, 'Nationalism and National Identity in British Politics, c. 1880s to 1914', in Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Phillips (eds), *History, nationhood, and the question of Britain*, (Basingstoke, 2004), 213-223; Bernard Porter, 'Empire and British National Identity, 1815-1914', in Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Phillips (eds), *History, nationhood, and the question of Britain*, (Basingstoke, 2004), ; Peter Mandler, 'What is "National Identity"? Definitions and Applications in Modern British Historiography', *Modern Intellectual History,* 3 (2006), 271-297; Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain*, (Oxford, 2006); Bernard Porter, '"Empire, What Empire?" Or, Why 80% of Early- and Mid-Victorians Were Deliberately Kept in Ignorance of It', *Victorian Studies*, 46 (2004), 256-263; Price, *An Imperial War*; Richard Price, 'Languages of Revisionism: Historians and Popular Politics in Nineteenth Century Britain', *Journal of Social History*, (1996), 229-251; Readman, 'The Conservative Party, Patriotism, and British Politics'; Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, (New Haven, 2001).

extensive debate over foreign policy at the 1880 general election.[98] The distinction between the patriotic languages of Conservatives and Liberals, especially in 1880, shows that what were considered one's country's merits and achievements could be very different indeed. This point was well summarised by Parry:

> British national identity between 1850 and 1880 was not much celebrated reference to the empire as such, and certainly not by reference to 'imperialism', but was conceived overwhelmingly in terms of the glory of the English constitution and its effects on national character.[99]

Thus, 'a very important vein in English patriotism' and an important part of both Conservative and Liberal patriotic appeals were to what J. H. Grainger has termed the 'patria of laws, customs and institutions of the country'[100]

Secondly, the examination of addresses suggests that the Conservatives use of the language of patriotism developed significantly over the period 1867-1880 and much sooner than the timing that was proposed by Cunningham. The discussion that follows suggests that Conservative patriotic appeal was strongly established by the time of the time of the 1868 general election but it was not jingoistic or imperialist in nature. Finally, the addresses provide an insight into the development of imperialism and the Empire in the language of British politics – suggesting that there were very few references to the Empire at the general elections of 1868 and 1874 and that even in 1880 there was only limited discussion.

Turning first to the nature of patriotic appeals, during the 1868 election campaign the key issue was the disestablishment of the Irish Church. Conservative candidates contesting the disestablishment played on fears of 'other more insidious manoeuvres to undermine the Established Church and dissever it from State connection' as a means of opposition and they often phrased this appeal in terms of protection of historic national institutions.[101] Henry Raikes, the successful Conservative at Chester, provides a good example of the phrasing of these appeals. He said:

> The freedom and prosperity of this great empire have been for the last three hundred years so closely bound up with the principles of the Reformation, that I cannot believe the cause good government is likely to gain by a national renunciation of

[98] See also Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, particularly pp. 323-386.
[99] Parry, 'The Impact of Napoleon III', p. 175.
[100] J. H. Grainger, *Patriotisms: Britain 1900-1939*, (London, 1986). For Disraeli's form of patriotism see especially J. P. Parry, 'Disraeli and England', *Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), 699-728.
[101] Election address of P. M. Grey Egerton, a Conservative returned unopposed for West Cheshire, *Cheshire Observer*, 15 August 1868.

> Protestantism. And I cannot but anticipate serious danger to the Church in England as well as to our other Protestant Institutions, possibly even a shock to the rights of all property, from such a step as it has been proposed to take with regard to the Church in Ireland.[102]

Other Conservatives attacked disestablishment by raising ultramontanism, thus seeking to play on patriotic fears of control from a foreign power as well as threats to the Church of England and property rights. Sir Henry Wolff, a Conservative candidate at Christchurch, thought it was:

> A scheme fostered by the Ultramontane section of the Roman Catholic clergy, in combination with those who, in this country, are bent on getting rid of the Established Church at any price. It is a blow aimed at that Church as a whole, and will if successful, endanger not only the union of Church and State, but the laws regulating property, the civil and religious liberties of the country and the Protestant faith.[103]

In many cases Conservative candidates sought to link the defence of the established church with the preservation of the English constitution and the defence of the monarchy. Edward Leigh Pemberton, a successful Conservative at Kent East was the most direct when he pledged 'to support the supremacy of our Queen and the integrity of our Constitution'.[104]

A distinctly Liberal variety of patriotism, less muscular and more based on principle and morality, can be seen in some of the addresses of Liberal candidates in 1868. Samuel Plimsoll, one of the successful Liberals at Derby, presents one:

> The English government exists to give the people of this country peace, security, and liberty, and to conduct its relations with other nations. Taking that last first, it appears to me of vital importance that it should most anxiously guard against giving any cause of offence; that it should exercise great forbearance when offence arises, and that it should carefully avoid any but absolutely necessary interference with the affairs of other people. I believe that Christianity and the Constitution will be alike strengthened by the removal of the Irish Church Establishment.[105]

Liberals also appealed to traditional patriotic symbols. John Bright at Birmingham showed this when he said:

> A Protestantism which is in alliance with Christian kindness and with justice, and my loyalty to the Constitution leads me to wish for the hearty union of the three kingdoms in allegiance to the Crown.[106]

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[102] Election address of Henry Cecil Raikes, ibid, 8 August 1868.
[103] Election address of Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, *Morning Post*, 8 September 1868.
[104] Election address of Edward Leigh Pemberton, *The Times*, 17 August 1868.
[105] Election address of Samuel Plimsoll, *Derby Mercury*, 2 August 1868.
[106] Election address of John Bright, *Birmingham Daily Post*, 1 September 1868.

Others saw the merits of their country in abiding by 'the principles of non-intervention in the internal affairs of our neighbours', and claimed that 'the just influence of England will ever be powerful in the Councils of Europe on the side of right, freedom, and civilisation'.[107] Whigs were not quite so moved to principle; in supporting the Abyssinian operation, Earl Grosvenor noted that 'old England has a long arm still, and hands and hearts ready to carry out her just and chivalrous enterprises'.[108]

The general election of 1874 saw a continued use and development of patriotic themes by the Conservatives. The disestablishment of the Irish Church did not prevent them from using the patriotic defence of the English church, the constitution and the monarchy in an even more robust way than in 1868, which adds some weight to the view that their 1868 policy merely used the issue of disestablishment of the Irish Church as a convenient peg on which to hang their development of this theme. This deployment of patriotism by the Conservatives, in a more enhanced way than during the 1868 election, is also shown by their preferred issues. After taxation, to which they were obliged to respond because of Gladstone's income tax pledge, the issues preferred by Conservative candidates were protection of religious education, the Church of England and foreign policy. These were all areas which enabled the display of patriotic credentials. Conservative language became more robust. Disraeli in his own address suggested some Liberals wished to 'assail the Monarchy, others impugn the independence of the House of Lords, while there are those who would relieve Parliament altogether from any share in the government of one portion of the United Kingdom'.[109] Other candidates thought that the result of the Liberal administration had been 'to overthrow or undermine institutions previously held sacred, and to disturb the settled institutions of the country both in Church and State' and Conservative policy was to 'maintain the rightful position and honour of the country'.[110] Thomas Cordes, the successful Conservative candidate at the Monmouth District of Burghs, gave a rounded exposition of the Conservative position as well as showing the importance of national issues in Wales, when he said:

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[107] Election address of Sam S. Marling, a successful Liberal candidate in Gloucestershire South, *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 7 November 1868.
[108] Election address of Earl Grosvenor, a successful Liberal at Chester, *Cheshire Observer*, 8 August 1868.
[109] Election address of B. Disraeli, *Daily News*, 26 January 1874.
[110] Election address of Edward Green, *Leeds Mercury*, 28 January 1874; Election address of Lewis R. Starkey, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 29 January 1874.

> I am firmly attached to the Constitution of the country, and believe that, in the maintenance of the Throne, our hereditary Second Chamber, a National church, and a system of Education in connection with Religious Teaching, are to be found the safeguards of real Liberty, and the foundation of the National prosperity.[111]

John Johnson, a Conservative candidate at Exeter gave another example when he said:

> I would steadfastly maintain the connection between Church and State, I desire to uphold the House of Lords as a vital branch of the Legislature; and, while ready to lend my aid to the removal of any proved abuse, I am anxious to preserve in its integrity that Constitution to which we are indebted for our national prosperity, and under which we enjoy such true liberty.[112]

In 1874 foreign policy provided fertile ground for Conservatives. The successful Conservative candidates at Portsmouth, thought that the Liberal government had conducted 'a foreign policy of imbecility and mismanagement which has tended to degrade England in the eyes of Europe and the world'.[113] Others thought that British foreign policy should be 'worthy of the ancient renown of England, and has in past years made her respected amongst the nations of the world', and 'conducted with a dignity and firmness which, while avoiding any undue interference with the affairs of other countries, shall secure to England the influence and respect abroad which are due to her rank among nations'. [114] Thus the Conservatives had continued to build on their patriotic approach which placed them as defenders of the constitution, the established institutions of the country, especially the throne and the church, together with a robust and manly foreign policy which firmly upheld England's dignity and rightful place among the nations of the world.

In 1874 the use of patriotic language by the Liberals in their election addresses was extremely rare. An exception was provided by Evelyn Ashley, who narrowly lost in the Isle of Wight, and said in his address:

> The determination to maintain in our Foreign Policy an attitude of conciliation and respect for the rights and feelings of other nations is quite compatible with a keen and watchful jealousy for the honour and interests of our common country. Should I be elected as your Member, I shall not be disposed to forget that Patriotism in a public man is a cardinal virtue.[115]

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[111] Election address of Thomas Cordes, *Western Mail*, 3 February 1874; also see Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity*.
[112] Election address of John G. Johnson, *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 28 January 1874.
[113] Election address of J. D. H. Elphinstone and Thomas C. Bruce, *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 28 January 1874; Election address of William Forsyth, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 January 1874.
[114] Election address of John G. Johnson, *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 28 January 1874.
[115] Election address of Evelyn Ashley, *Morning Post*, 28 January 1874.

On occasion references to foreign policy could produce some patriotic allusions. W. H. Stone, a Liberal candidate at Portsmouth, was in favour of 'such a policy toward foreign nations as, *while maintaining her due position*, may keep this country clear of the unspeakable calamities of war'(emphasis added).[116] These, however, were exceptional examples. Most Liberal candidates focussed on their record in government and what they saw as key legislative issues such as taxation, education and land law. Some Liberals sought to answer the question of disestablishment of the Church of England by declaring in its favour. However, some declared themselves in favour of disestablishment.[117] This variety of views reflects Parry's argument that by the time of the 1874 general election 'there was hardly any policy on which the Liberal party could unite'.[118] The infrequent use of patriotic language also reflects his view that the government's apparent impotence in European security had rendered it impossible to continue the uplifting international rhetoric of the 1860s and the inability to agree on an 'uplifting civic republican agenda' had made it impossible to replace this domestically. Liberal patriotism was at a very low ebb in 1874.

Following the Eastern Question and Gladstone's Midlothian campaign, foreign policy was the most frequently mentioned issue in the 1880 campaign and gave significant opportunities for both parties to display their very different forms of patriotic language. The Conservatives again focussed on the strength and firmness of their policy and honour of England. One candidate said the previous administration was:

> A government which, during a time of great danger and anxiety, has upheld the position and honour of England, and at the same time averted the evils of a European war, deserves the support of all who truly love their country.[119]

Others noted that policy had been 'firm and vigorous' and it had 'left England strong in Europe and powerful and respected over the World'.[120] At Dudley Alfred Waterman stood unsuccessfully as a Conservative and noted in his address that 'No true Englishman will be content that his country shall accept a second place in the Councils

[116] Election address of W. H. Stone, *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 28 January 1874.
[117] For example Carter at Leeds 25/1/74.
[118] Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, p. 277.
[119] Election address of Sir Ivor B. Guest, one of the unsuccessful Conservative candidates at Bristol, *The Times*, 25 March 1880.
[120] Election address of Alban G. H. Gibbs, the unsuccessful Conservative candidate at Abingdon, *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 20 March 1880; Election address of P. Egerton Warburton, one of the successful Conservative candidates at Cheshire-Mid, *Liverpool Mercury*, 27 March 1880.

of Nations'.[121] It is noteworthy that many of these phrases had been used before by the Conservatives.

Liberal language again showed a more principled approach. Sir John Simon succinctly outlined a common Liberal view. He stated:

> The Prime Minister asks the country to support him in securing the "ineffable blessing of peace" by "the presence, not to say the ascendancy of England in the Councils of Europe". Yes! But let our "presence" or our "ascendancy," be manifested by our justice and wisdom, by a policy that shall appeal to the moral consciousness of nations, instead of kindling antipathies, stirring up warlike passions, and feeding vain-glorious national pride.[122]

Another noted that 'These wars have been commenced and carried on without any reason that can be justified by the codes of Christianity, or morality, or even by the lower standards of necessity or expediency'.[123] Others referred to a policy which 'without dictation or offence to other powers, shall maintain the place which England occupies in the estimation of all great nations, much to the advantage of freedom and civilisation'.[124]

The adjectives used by Conservatives, particularly in the 1880 campaign, in relation to patriotic topics often focus on such qualities as strength, firmness and power; a 'manly' approach which is interestingly consistent with the development of other Conservative languages after the 1867 Reform Act. Accordingly, Cunningham's argument might have been stronger if he had suggested that the Conservative brand of patriotic language associated with strength, power and manliness became, as he put it, a key component of the ideological apparatus of the imperialist state.[125] These addresses provide substantial evidence for the view that:

> During this period, the conservative concept of the nation became a key weapon in the ideological and electoral armoury of the Conservative Party. Burke's conservative state patriotism was translated into an official state-based nationalism, based on the conservative concept of the nation.[126]

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[121] Election address of Alfred Waterman, *Birmingham Daily Post*, 16 March 1880.
[122] Election address of Sir John Simon, the successful Liberal candidate at Dewesbury, *Leeds Mercury*, 20 March 1880.
[123] Election address of Joseph Whitwell Pease, one of the successful Liberal candidates in Durham South, *Northern Echo*, 20 March 1880.
[124] Election address of W. E. Forster, one of the successful Liberal candidates at Bradford, *Bury Post*, 16 March 1880.
[125] See also Lawrence, 'Class and Gender in the Making of Urban Toryism, 1880-1914'; Lawrence, *Speaking*.
[126] Philip Lewis Lynch, 'British Conservatism and the Concept of Nation', (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 1992), pp. 79-82.

This policy was a deliberate shift instituted by Disraeli in which there would, amongst other things, be:

> A concerted use of appeals to patriotism and national unity, in which the Conservative Party was portrayed as the national party and contrasted with Gladstone's "anti-patriotic" Liberal party; the portrayal of the Conservative Party as the party of empire, and the spread of imperial myths into popular culture and the further development of such symbols of conservative nationalism as the monarchy and the empire.[127]

This thesis is further supported by the rhetoric of Disraeli as prime mover of the use of this form of patriotism by the Conservatives. His 'one England' views were already well established by 1868 and in 1867 he had always thought that the Tory party was the national party of England.[128] His subsequent addresses and speeches show the development of the patriotic message well before the Eastern Question. This direction of Conservative policy was signalled in a speech in 1867 when Disraeli said:

> I have always looked upon the interests of the labouring classes as essentially the most Conservative interests of the country…and I have always thought that those who were most interested in the stability and even the glory of the state are the great mass of the population, happy to enjoy the privileges of freemen and good laws, and proud at the same time as inhabitants of a great country to give their name an honourable and glorious reputation in every quarter of the globe.

The rousing finale to his speech told the audience that he expected:

> That you will exercise [your popular privileges] to maintain the institutions of your country, and to increase its power, its glory and its fame.[129]

We have seen how important the leader's address became as a statement of party policy and further signs of the development of Disraeli's policy can be seen in his address for the 1868 election. He claimed Conservative credit for the Reform Act asserting that the legislation had been in 'unison with the character of the country', and was 'calculated to animate the spirit of the community and add strength and stability to the State'. Similarly, in the field of foreign affairs the government's conduct had meant that 'the just influence of England' had been established as well as maintaining the honour of the Crown' and obtained 'for her Majesty's forces the admiring respect of Europe'.[130] His famous speech at the Crystal Palace in 1872 had similar implications and language. He declaimed that the Conservative Party 'has three great objectives'. These were 'to maintain the institutions of the country', 'to uphold the Empire of

[127] Ibid, p. 72.
[128] Cunningham, 'Language of Patriotism', p. 21. Parry, 'Disraeli and England'.
[129] Speech by Disraeli on 30 October 1867 to an Edinburgh working men's meeting, *London Standard*, 31 October 1867.
[130] *Bury Post*, 16 March 1880.

England' and 'the elevation of the condition of the people'.[131] His view of the importance of patriotism to the Conservative appeal to the newly enfranchised working classes was made explicit when he said:

> When I say 'Conservative', I use the word in its purest and loftiest sense. I mean that the people of England, and especially the working classes of England, are proud of belonging to a great country and wish to maintain its greatness – that they are proud of belonging to an Imperial country, and are resolved to maintain, if they can, their empire – that they believe on the whole, that the greatness and the empire of England are to be attributed to the ancient institutions of the land.[132]

The place of the established church in this developing concept of Conservative nation was also emphasised when he said 'I see in the church, as I believe I see in England, an immense effort to rise to national feelings and recur to national feelings. (Cheers.) The Church of England, like all our institutions, feels that it must be national'. His speech was full of other references to the importance of empire and to pride in the honour, power and glory of England and how it should command the respect of the world. The references to the Empire and imperialism in this speech have played a role in the considerable historical debate over the importance of Empire and imperialism in British cultural and political life.[133]

An examination of election addresses can make a contribution to this debate. The progression of Disraeli's personal election addresses is interesting in this respect. We have seen that his 1868 address he referred to 'the just influence of England' and obtaining 'for her Majesty's forces the admiring respect of Europe. However, he does not refer to Empire or imperialism at all, the nearest he gets is a reference to 'her Majesty's dominions' when he is drawing attention to the differences in conditions in Ireland with those in other dominions. In his 1874 address Disraeli does mention the empire once but very much in the context of presenting the Conservative party as the defender of national institutions and presenting the Liberals as potential enemies of those institutions. This was consistent with the general tenor of the party's patriotic language in 1874, and he said: 'There is hope… that he [Gladstone] is not, certainly at

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[131] Disraeli, speech at the Crystal Palace, 24 June 1872 in T. E. Kebbel, *Selected Speeches of the late Right Honourable the Earl of Beaconsfield*, (London, 1882).
[132] Disraeli, speech at the Crystal Palace, 24 June 1872 in ibid.
[133] The literature on this subject is extensive. Some important works include: Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*; Porter, '"Empire, What Empire?"'; Price, *An Imperial War*; Readman, 'The Conservative Party, Patriotism, and British Politics'; Richard Price, 'One Big Thing: Britain, Its Empire, and Their Imperial Culture', *Journal of British Studies*, 45 (2006), 602-627; Rose, *Intellectual Life*; Richard Koebner and Helmut Dan Schmidt, *Imperialism: The Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840-1960*, (Cambridge, 1964); Cunningham, 'Language of Patriotism'; Cunningham, *British Public Opinion and the Eastern Question*; Cunningham, 'The Conservative Party and Patriotism'.

present, opposed to our national institutions or to the maintenance of the integrity of the Empire'.[134]

In his 1880 address Beaconsfield did not use the words Empire or imperialism. He made opposition to Home Rule a key theme of this address and in this context he does accuse the Liberals for seeking the disintegration of the empire. He said:

> And yet there are some who challenge the expediency of the Imperial character of this realm. Having attempted, and failed, to enfeeble our colonies by their policy of decomposition, they may perhaps now recognize in the disintegration of the United Kingdom a mode which will not only accomplish, but precipitate, their purpose'.[135]

Gladstone did not mention the Empire or imperialism in either of his 1868 and 1874 addresses. His lengthy statement of 1880 gave a Liberal response to Beaconsfield's accusation that the Liberal's sought the dismemberment of the empire. His comments bear repetition because they represent a rare statement by him on the issue and give a good summary of the Liberal view. He began by reminding electors that they had to decide upon whether they were content or otherwise with the way the Conservatives had governed 'this great empire' and went on to say:

> In the electioneering address which the Prime Minister has issued an attempt is made to work upon your fears by dark allusions to the repeal of the Union and the abandonment of the colonies'. He added 'As to the colonies, Liberal Administrations set free their trade with all the world, [and] gave them popular and responsible government.[136]

Hartington too responded to Beaconsfield's attack stating that the strength of the colonies was because Liberal governments had given them self-government and taught them dependence on Britain for their defence was not compatible with their 'dignity or freedoms'. He reprimanded the Prime Minister for, he said, 'no patriotic purpose …is gained by the use of the language of exaggeration in describing the Irish agitation for Home Rule.' [137]

In the examination of 303 election addresses for candidates of both parties in county and borough constituencies in England for the 1868 general election, only one reference was found to the empire. Examination of the election addresses of some 367 candidates for the same constituencies in 1874 showed 15 mentioned the empire or imperialism. Candidates' addresses in 1880 showed a marked increase in the use of the

[134] Election Address of Disraeli, *The Times*, 26 January 1874
[135] Address of Beaconsfield, *Bury Post*, 16 March 1880.
[136] Address of W. E. Gladstone, *Bury Post*, 16 March 1880.
[137] Address of Lord Hartington, ibid, 16 March 1880.

words ‘empire’ and ‘imperialism’, probably because of the emphasis on foreign policy at that election. The response to that stimulus was not, however, overwhelming. Only 55 candidates out of the 423 whose addresses were examined made reference to the empire. These results suggest that Richard Koebner and Helmut Dan Smith are correct in their proposition that Disraeli’s references to Empire in his speeches of 1872 at the Crystal Palace and Manchester:

> Fell flat in its effect on public opinion in England. It met almost no response in the press. Disraeli drew the consequences and never returned to the subject of the empire again. He made no use of it in the election campaign of 1874.[138]

Indeed, the references to Empire were not only ignored but as Parry has powerfully argued, were not intended to be followed, for Disraeli was merely berating ‘what he saw as Liberal failures in the past to ‘safeguard the colonial relationship’.[139]

V Conclusions

Candidates’ election addresses are an important source of historical evidence of what politicians, and by extension, electors thought were the key issues to be decided at election time. Apart from the issues themselves they provide valuable insights into the discourse of electoral politics through the expressions and language they contained. Analysis of the issues contained in addresses for the three general elections of the period show a remarkable degree of consistency and lack of variability – purely local issues are referred to very infrequently. This provides strong evidence for the nationalisation of electoral politics in this period and that this apparent lack of importance of ‘locality’ was established as early as the first contest in 1868. The congruity, both in ideas and language, between the addresses issued by the party leaders and those issued by a party’s candidates reinforces this finding. The addresses of the party leaders were regarded as party manifestos from 1868 onwards.

The language and expressions used in these addresses enables us to track certain themes that developed during this period. Certainly they show that appeals to patriotism were an important part of the message of both parties and these appeals could be based on different expressions of patriotism and concepts of patrie. It seems clear that the Conservatives, led by Disraeli’s beliefs and examples, sought from the expansion of the electorate after the 1867 Reform Act, to develop a patriotic appeal

[138] Schmidt, *Imperialism*, p.111.
[139] Parry, 'Disraeli and England', pp. 717-718.

which was, at root, an appeal to uphold the historic values of England. This involved the defence of her historic institutions and the defence of the constitution. A firm and manly foreign policy was part of this in the context of maintaining England's status and her respect in the eyes of other nations. They also show this appeal was not jingoistic. The Empire and the concept of imperialism were not significant features of the discourse of electoral politics in this period. Despite the importance that some have attached to Disraeli's references to Empire in his 1872 speeches and to the impact of the Eastern Question, references to the Empire were uncommon in 1880 and extremely rare before then.

Chapter IV - Organisation

I Introduction

Chapter II described how the 1867 Reform Act created a mass electorate for the first time in Great Britain with those eligible to vote dramatically increasing from approximately 930,000 to 2,257,000, an increase of 242%. The increase in the borough constituencies was even more pronounced and created some very large urban constituencies; for example, Manchester now boasted an electorate of some 48,000, Glasgow 47,000 and Hackney 40,000. This increase in the electorate had profound and lasting effects on party organisation both at a local and national level. The Reform Act of 1832 had initiated the development of some constituency organisation because of its registration requirements and this had led to the formation of national party organisations dedicated to the support of that process.[1] For both parties the huge influx of new voters meant that ensuring their supporters were on the register became even more important after the 1867 Act. The Act also meant that by the time of the general election of 1868 there was, in many constituencies, much more to electoral organisation than the maintenance of the registers, however important that may have been.

Such a substantial increase in the electorate meant that at election time the campaign would require the engagement of significantly more canvassers, 'watchers' and other assistants; the organisation and provision of transport to convey electors to the poll; the organisation of adequate refreshments and meeting rooms at local inns and, in some constituencies the provision of monetary incentives to numbers of electors. These activities required not only increased funding but a significant increase in the numbers of local volunteers to assist. This meant, in turn, that the strength of local organisations became much more important. At the same time, there had been a decline, since 1832, in older organisational methods in which local influence was the most important factor. This reduction in the power of the magnates without it being 'superseded or adequately supplemented' left the electoral territory ripe for the

[1] See Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work*.

creation and implementation of new approaches.[2] As a result there was, in many constituencies, a step change in party organisation and the funding which it required. These developments continued to gather momentum in the 1860s as further reform came to be expected and, afterwards, continued to be fuelled by the impact of the 1868 general election and the Ballot Act of 1872. This act represented a further step change in the development of party organisation as the parties needed to help electors operate the new system of voting and had to develop new techniques to monitor and manage the progress of the party's vote on election day. Finally, the gradual refinement of the interpretation of the provisions of the Reform Act meant that party agents and solicitors became even busier fighting cases before the revising barristers to ensure their supporters were on the electoral register.

But it was not just the need to get greater numbers of electors to cast their ballots under an altered electoral system which drove the need for greater party organisation. The introduction to this thesis described the reaction by historians to the pervasive influence of electoral sociological approaches to the study and explanation of electoral politics and the creation of a new orthodoxy which has placed greater emphasis on the role of party organisational structures in enabling an interactive system of mediation and adaptation between the voters, local political participants and the central party leaders.[3] Organisation therefore had a key role to play, not just in the practical organisation of much greater numbers of electors, but also at a fundamental level in forming a system for dynamically arbitrating and reformulating people's sense of political and social meanings as well as fabricating practicable programmes and deep-rooted foundations of political adherence.[4]

This chapter seeks to examine some of the ways in which the development of party organisation sought to achieve these objectives. It commences with a brief review of the development by both parties of their central organisational structures but suggests that, whilst these have received the primary if not exclusive attention of historians in the analysis of party organisation in this period, the exclusiveness of their study is in fact a result of an emphasis on electoral sociological approaches. It suggests that in order to understand the importance of party organisation in dynamically communicating and defining the party's message and, hence, its effect on the language,

[2] Thompson, 'Gladstone's whips', p. 189.
[3] See Chapter I.
[4] See also Alex Windscheffel, 'Villa Toryism? The·Making of London Conservatism, 1868-1896', (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 2000), p. 144.

rhetoric and ideas of electoral politics it is necessary to look further at the development of grass roots organisation. Despite this there has not been a great deal of work on the local organisations of either party in the early part of the period whilst much of the work done on the development of central party structures by Hanham and Feuchtwanger remains sound. [5] For these reasons the chapter concentrates on the development of local organisations. To do this it offers some new research on local Liberal associations and the growth of Conservative working men's organisations in the 1860s.

II Central party structures

The rapid 'nationalisation' of party politics from 1868 to 1880, together with the structural pressures of franchise and redistribution reform meant that party hierarchies became increasingly interested in organisational activities, seeing them both as a means to win elections and also as a necessary means of influence over local arrangements. Developments in this period accordingly put additional pressure on all aspects of central party organisation. The response of the parties was different both in timing and extent, and the Conservatives certainly seemed to be quicker off the mark. Conservative developments were undoubtedly provoked by the Tory fear of the consequences of enfranchising such a significant proportion of the working classes and by Disraeli's less publicised, but undoubted interest in, party organisation. Organisation was certainly regarded as crucial by contemporaries evidenced not least by the money that candidates spent in their efforts to be elected and on the interest and comments of leading politicians. Even Gladstone, who was always more convinced of the superior power of ideas, admitted the necessity of appropriate arrangements.[6]

The importance of organisation seemed self-evident to the Conservatives and the response of the party to these developments occurred at both a national and constituency level. As Windscheffel has put it 'organisational efficiency and sophisticated, modernising techniques of party management have long been pivotal to explanations of the revival in Conservative fortunes after 1867'.[7] At a central level

[5] Hanham, *Elections*; Hanham, 'Political Patronage'; H. J. Hanham, 'British Party Finance 1868-1880', *Historical Research*, 27 (1954), 69-90; E. J. Feuchtwanger, *Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party: Conservative Leadership and Organization after the Second Reform Bill*, (Oxford, 1968).
[6] William Gladstone papers, correspondence with Bright, Add. MS 43385, f.251 and Add. MS 44543, f.64.
[7] Windscheffel, *The·Making of London Conservatism*, p. 84. See also Feuchtwanger, *Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party*; Marsh, *The Discipline of Popular Government*; Hanham, *Elections*.

there were a number of developments in response to the changed electoral environment. In the mid-1860s central Conservative organisation was overseen by the Chief Whip who from the formation of the Derby ministry in 1866 until 1868 was Thomas Edward Taylor.[8] He was, as part of his duties, responsible for the supervision of Markham Spofforth who was the party's Principal Agent and a member of the firm of solicitors of Baxter, Rose, Norton who acted as parliamentary agents for the party as well as looking after Disraeli's personal affairs. R. Dudley Baxter, another member of the firm, was appointed to act as Spofforth's assistant and to take charge of a Conservative Registration Association.[9]

Disraeli took a close interest in party organisation. This interest had been clear from the very early development of his political career; in 1835, for instance, he had considered the security and maintenance of party organisation should be one of the three key aspirations of the Conservative party.[10] It was therefore no surprise that after the election defeat in 1868 he took steps to revitalise the central functions of the Conservative party.[11] Spofforth's tenure as party agent ended in March 1870 and J. E. Gorst was appointed in his place. Gorst had been a formative influence in the earlier formation of NUCCA (which is described below) and he established his offices in those of the Conservative Registration Association where C. Keith-Falconer was secretary. Gorst and Keith-Falconer subsequently in March 1871 became joint secretaries of the National Union of Conservative Associations.[12] With the gathering of these organisations under the same leadership and at the same premises the title of Conservative Central Office began to be applied to these arrangements.[13] Gorst, particularly, appreciated the importance of local party organisation and 'he visited constituencies, met local leaders and worked to co-ordinate and assist the growing number of Conservative working men's clubs that had been formed as a result of the agitation for, and passage of, the Reform Act in 1867'.[14] The organisation of Disraeli's well known visit to Manchester in 1872 was an example of the effort he put into attempting to bring together local supporters and the party leadership. At the same

[8] John Sainty and Gary W. Cox, 'The Identification of Government Whips in the House of Commons, 1830-1905', *Parliamentary History*, 16 (1997), 339-358.
[9] Hanham, 'Political Patronage'; see also references to Baxter's statistical work in Chapter I.
[10] Paul Smith, *Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform*, (London, 1967), p.15.
[11] Hanham, *Elections*, p. 357; Harold E. Gorst, *The Earl of Beaconsfield*, (London, 1900).
[12] *London Standard*, 5 June 1871.
[13] Hanham, *Elections*, pp. 358-359.
[14] Zig Layton-Henry, 'Democracy and Reform in the Conservative Party', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13 (1978), 653-670, p. 656.

time, Disraeli also set up a committee to manage elections in the counties and smaller boroughs which were still under the influence of local landowners.[15]

The efforts put into the organisation of the party paid off for the Conservatives in 1874 with their sweeping election victory. Afterwards, however, the leadership became more pre-occupied with matters of government and, as a result, party organisation was not at all high on the Prime Minister's agenda. In addition, Gorst had hoped that after taking power Disraeli's dispensation of patronage would adequately reward local Conservative leaders in the boroughs. This was not to be the case and he became disillusioned by both this and by what he regarded as a failure of the party leadership to recognise his own efforts.[16] His appointment as party agent had formally lapsed after the election and no successor had been appointed although he remained available for official consultation, which was not sought. He returned to the Commons in 1875 and finally in 1877 W. B. Skene was appointed as a replacement party agent. Skene was a Scottish landowner and in Feuchtwanger's words was 'entirely unsuitable for the role of party agent'.[17] This was perhaps borne out by the decision to dissolve in March 1880 which was entirely supported by central office led by Skene. When the Conservatives lost so comprehensively Beaconsfield and others in the party hierarchy were mystified why this advice had been so wrong. As a result, for the Conservatives, party organisation became important again and W. H. Smith was appointed chairman of a standing committee with the task of its improvement.[18]

The central organisation structures of the Liberal party lagged behind those of the Conservative party during the 1860s and 1870s perhaps reflecting Gladstone's lesser emphasis on the subject; certainly 'unlike Disraeli, Gladstone had no desire personally to supervise the conduct of the election, and indeed was ignorant of many of the problems involved'.[19] Central Liberal organisation was controlled by the chief whip and in 1860 the incumbent whip, Henry Brand, joined with William Drake, a City solicitor who had been appointed Principal Agent in 1857, to form the Liberal Registration Association. This organisation, run by Thomas Roberts, had as its main function the giving of assistance to Liberal organisations in the large number of

[15] Ibid, p. 656.
[16] Ibid, p. 657.
[17] Feuchtwanger, *Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party*, p. 140.
[18] Ibid, p. 140.
[19] Thompson, 'Gladstone's whips', p.190.

constituencies where there was no organised plan of registration.[20] [21] Brand retired in December 1866 and was replaced by George Grenfell Glyn, later second Lord Wolverton, a close personal friend of Gladstone, although Brand continued to assist until the 1868 general election. It was under Glyn that the whips' office and the Liberal Registration Association were fused into a single party headquarters.[22] After Glyn's succession to the peerage in 1873 he was replaced by Arthur Wellesley Peel who acted as chief whip for the 1874 general election and was replaced after that by William Patrick Adam, who served until 1880. At this time the Liberal Registration Association was renamed the Liberal Central Association. When the Liberal Principal Agent resigned in 1865 Brand decided that his work should be spread between the chief whip, the Registration Association and a newly appointed firm of parliamentary agents. Thus, until well after the 1880 election, the Liberals did without a central party agent.

The National Liberal Federation was formed on 31 May 1877 by a meeting of 95 Liberal associations and Francis Schnadhorst became its first secretary.[23] Schnadhorst was a member of the Birmingham Liberal Association which had been successful in gaining all three seats in their constituency in 1868 despite the introduction of the minority clause. Schnadhorst was appointed secretary of the association in 1873 and the Liberals were successful in winning all three seats again in 1874. After his appointment to the National Liberal Federation in 1877, Schnadhorst spent the next three years promoting the system of the Birmingham Liberals to other local Liberal organisations.[24] Perhaps the overall lack of urgency on the part of the Liberals to the development of party organisation could be partly attributed to the different attitude of Whig notables to political organisation as compared to their Conservative counterparts. The Whig journal, the *Edinburgh Review*, remarked in 1879 when commenting on the future of the National Liberal Federation that 'political associations of a permanent character have never taken root in this country'.[25]

III Electoral sociology and organisation

[20] Hanham, *Elections*.
[21] T. A. Jenkins, *The Liberal Ascendancy 1830-1886*, (Basingstoke, 1994), p. 102.
[22] Thompson, 'Gladstone's whips', p. 195.
[23] Barry McGill, 'Francis Schnadhorst and Liberal Party Organization', *Journal of Modern History*, 34 (1962), 19-39, p. 20.
[24] Ibid, p. 20.
[25] *Edinburgh Review*, 1879, p. 265. (The Government and the Opposition Vol.149, J. Chamberlain 'The Caucus' 149:305, p.244).

The description of party organisation in the previous section has a noticeable focus on central party figures and institutions with an emphasis on the mechanistic aspects of organisation. In concentrating on these features this brief synopsis reflects the same prioritisation as the principal historiography dealing with the subject. Yet this focus on the desire of central party figures to organise and control local party organisations and the centralised methods and institutional structures they used to do this has led to two major problems in the scholarly assessment of the importance of party organisation in this period. Firstly, there has been a consequent lack of attention to the development and activities of local organisations, the development and operation of which often took place independently from the party centres. Secondly, there has been an overemphasis on what might be termed the mechanics of party structures, both local and national. Thus, in so far as there has been attention to activities at an individual constituency level this has focussed on organisational activities during campaign periods immediately leading up to the polls and involving such activities as the organisation of transport or the canvass, and at a central or national level, involving the activities of the party whips, central organisations and chief agents. There has been very little attention given to the manner in which parties sought to develop and promulgate their message and the symbols and rhetoric they used to do that.

This emphasis on practical organisation results from the influence of electoral sociology which sees a key role of party organisations as the identification of the, already largely pre-determined, supporters of a party and the development of processes and mechanisms to ensure that they vote. The principal, and sometimes only, purpose of party organisation is, accordingly, on this model, identifying and 'getting out' the vote. Of course, any approach to party organisation which follows these principles is then open to many of the criticisms which can be made of electoral sociology itself. As has been discussed, electoral sociology has frequently been criticised because it gives little active role to political parties regarding them as passive beneficiaries of social change and failing to recognise the contingent nature of their appeal to the electorate. Its emphasis on the importance of central control accordingly fails to recognise that organisational influence also flowed in the opposite direction. Lawrence and Taylor have stressed the importance of the role of party in the mediation of political ideas and language and the crucial role played by them in the language, culture and imagery of electoral politics. Later approaches to electoral politics have recognised that work on

political parties needs to 'devote more attention to the ways in which political parties have themselves defined and been forced to redefine the social identities and audiences to which they address their politics'.[26] However, little work has been done in this area, particularly in the period under consideration; a period which most writers, of whatever views, would agree was highly important in the development of mass parties. As a result, work on party organisation has failed to recognise the importance of ideology and locality in an organisational context especially the importance of the parties' role in the language and rhetoric of electoral politics. This taken together with the lack of work on local Liberal and Conservative organisation on even a mechanistic level means that a different approach is required to deal with these deficiencies. As Windscheffel has noted:

> It is more useful to acknowledge that the creation of party organisations involved a complex dynamic of discussion, negotiation and accommodation between the electorate, local activists and party leadership. Party organisation was thus part of the process of actively mediating and redefining political and social identities, and of constructing viable policies and stable bases of support.[27]

The next part of this chapter seeks to take some steps to further illuminate these issues. It does this by first considering the development of local Liberal Registration Associations and then the formation of Conservative working men's associations. The examination of the development of these associations seeks to address the first of the issues discussed above, namely the relative lack of historical attention to grass roots organisation. The examination of Conservative working men's associations also addresses the importance of party organisation in the formation of the language, imagery and socialisation of electoral politics. The need for further investigation of grass roots Conservatism has been aptly expressed by Matthew Roberts who characterised the issue as follows:

> For all the rich literature that exists on the high politics of 1867 and the organizational consequences at the centre, historians are still largely in the dark about how the Conservative Party in the localities managed the immediate transition to mass politics in 1867 and 1884. What of the continuities and changes in popular Conservatism, and in particular how ideological aspects of Conservatism filtered down to the grass roots level and shaped the character of popular toryism? [28]

IV Liberal associations

[26] Taylor, 'Electoral sociology', p. 18.
[27] Windscheffel, *The·Making of London Conservatism*, p. 144.
[28] Roberts, 'Popular Conservatism in Britain', pp. 408 – 409.

In his important work on the development of the Liberal party in the 1850s and 1860s John Vincent remarked that 'the massive development of party loyalties throughout the country preceded any corresponding full development of party organisation by almost a generation'.[29] He went on to suggest that in the 1860s the two principal elements of Liberal organisation, beside the borough managers, were such central organisation as existed through the Liberal Registration Association and the Liberal club movements in the constituencies. He suggested that very little could be said of either beyond indicating some future lines of research 'which might throw some light in these very dark places'.[30]

Recent research on Liberal organisation in the period 1832-52 has contested Vincent's view on the generational delay in the development of party organisation.[31] It suggests that this is no longer valid and that Liberal organisation in the 20 years after the Great Reform Act was 'remarkably extensive'.[32] What follows here supports this revisionist view by suggesting that Liberal organisations in the constituencies were formed at much earlier dates than those suggested by Vincent. By way of example, Vincent suggests that there was no Liberal association in Bury until 1877 but there does appear to have been an active Liberal Registration Association operating at least as early as 1868.[33]

In order to research the prevalence and nature of the general activities of local Liberal organisations in the later 1860s a textual search was made for references to 'Liberal Registration Associations' and 'Liberal Associations' in the available digitised copies of British newspapers published between 1 January 1860 and 31 December 1869.[34] The results of this survey show that in the larger parliamentary constituencies there was already in this period a widespread establishment of local Liberal organisations. Of the 38 constituencies with an electorate in excess of 7,000 (for the 1865 general election), 31 (or 82%) had a Liberal association of some form by the end of the 1860s, and, indeed, most of these had been formed before the 1868

[29] Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party*, p.128.
[30] Ibid, p. 120.
[31] Coohill, 'Liberal Party Control'
[32] Ibid, p. 77.
[33] *Burnley Gazette*, 6 June 1868, p. 2; Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party*, p. 128.
[34] The database is published by published by brightsolid Newspaper Archive Limited and the British Library and is available at http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/. A listing of the newspapers searched is included in the Appendix II.

general election. References were also found to such associations in another 50 constituencies. It should also be borne in mind that the wide scope of political opinion which was encompassed by the Victorian Liberal Party meant that there could be several specialised organisations representing different shades of Liberal opinion or specific interests. As Vincent put it 'in most boroughs…there would be at least one society for Parliamentary reform, one group of temperance reformers, and another political organisation representing the Liberationists'.[35] However, the capabilities of these organisations were quite another matter.

These results demonstrate that, certainly in the constituencies across Great Britain, there was already a significant coverage of local Liberal organisations, mostly before the general election of 1868. A natural question that arises, however, is the nature of the political activities of these associations. Registration associations had grown up in response to the requirements of the Great Reform Act and their primary functions had been to ensure that a party's supporters had been identified and that they were duly registered, which involved the association frequently fighting cases in the courts of the revising barristers.[36] The newspaper reports on these associations shed some light on this question and suggest that their activities were more extensive than just registration matters.

There is a significant body of cases which demonstrates that Liberal registration associations were deeply involved in the selection of parliamentary candidates. Selection was not the only role of the associations. Frequently MPs would regard the local Liberal Registration Association as managing the party's interests in the constituency. For example, the importance of the Liberal Registration Association of Halifax was underlined when one of the sitting Liberal MPs, Sir Charles Wood, chose the Association as the body to inform that he would not be standing at the next election.[37] The associations could also become involved in the behaviour of local Liberal MPs. This was shown in Kent in August 1866 when a meeting of the East Kent Liberal Registration Association was convened to discuss the views of the sitting Liberal MP Sir Edward Deering. The association was concerned that Deering had failed to fully support the Reform Bill of the Liberal administration which had just left office. Letters from Gladstone and Russell had been received concerning Deering's

[35] Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party*, p. 127.
[36] See Coohill, 'Liberal Party Control'; Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work*.
[37] *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 27 May 1865, p. 6.

position and these were read to the meeting. The association eventually decided to see whether Deering gave consistent opposition to the new Conservative administration before taking any further action.[38] Another example of a local registration association considering the suitability of a sitting representative arose at Bristol in 1866 in relation to one of the sitting Liberal MPs, Sir Morton Peto. Peto was famous for his railway construction business but some cloudy dealings concerning the London Chatham and Dover Railway brought his firm to the brink of bankruptcy. He wrote to the Bristol Liberal Registration Association explaining his position and offering to resign. It was a mark of Peto's charisma that the meeting unanimously requested that he remained as the MP. He was subsequently declared personally bankrupt and had to resign.[39] The leading figures of the party also participated in these meetings of endorsement and support. The South Lancashire Liberal Registration Association held a meeting in May 1867 with the purpose of expressing confidence in Gladstone as their candidate – describing him as the 'true and only leader of the Liberal party'.[40] Similarly, the North Lancashire Liberal Registration Association held what was described as an enthusiastic meeting in July 1865 in Preston. The meeting was held to pass a resolution of support for Hartington who attended and addressed the meeting.[41]

At Huddersfield on 24 January 1865 the local Liberal Registration Association chaired a meeting at which Edward Leatham, the local MP, was the main speaker. At Maidstone in 1865 the two Liberal candidates for West Kent addressed a large and influential meeting of their supporters organised by the local West Kent Liberal Registration Association, whose chairman presided over the event.[42] The registration associations were also not averse to co-operating with other Liberal pressure groups. One example was the United Liberal Association of Leicester which held a combined committee meeting with the local Parliamentary Reform Association in April 1866. The meeting was held to discuss the policy on reform of the Liberal party. The important points were that it indicated both the willingness of the local association to debate with other Liberal pressure groups and the activity of local associations in political topics of the day.[43]

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[38] *Morning Post*, 6 August 1866, p. 2.
[39] *Western Daily Press*, 15 June 1866, p. 3; M. H. Port, 'Peto, Sir (Samuel) Morton, first baronet (1809–1889)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2011), .
[40] *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 4 May 1867, p. 10.
[41] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 July 1865, p. 9.
[42] *Maidstone Telegraph*, 10 June 1865, p. 2.
[43] *Leicester Journal*, 4 May 1866, p. 8.

There was certainly some pressure from active Liberals and pressure groups to widen the spread of political activities of the registration associations. At a meeting of the Holbeck Reform Association on 21 January 1865 a local councillor held forth on the need for Liberals to be united and the necessity of the Liberal Registration Association expanding its influence in ways other than just registering votes.[44] It is interesting to note that a few days later the Leeds Liberal Registration Association had resolved to invite Lord Amberley to address the association on the question of reform.[45]

There was also significant growth in the Liberal working men's associations. An example was at Exeter where a Liberal Working Men's Protection Association was formed in December 1868.[46] It is notable that instances of Liberal working men's associations only occur to any great extent from 1868 onwards. A number are referenced before the general election of that year, but most are after. As will be seen in subsequent sections this places the development of these associations much later than the development of Conservative working men's associations. However, in an editorial in July 1868 the *Gloucester Journal* contrasted the recent development of Conservative working men's associations and was convinced that these were being started because 'Liberal Working Men's Associations, so long the object of Conservative sneers have exercised a most obvious a salutary influence'.[47]

Liberal registration associations also had an important role to play in election planning and strategy. The North Riding Liberal Registration Association held a meeting in April 1865 to discuss the results of a canvas undertaken to identify Liberal supporters and to ensure their registration. Sir Frederick Milbank, the prospective Liberal candidate, attended and based on the canvassing it was thought he could improve his vote by some 2,000 and capture one of the seats. This proved relatively accurate. At the general election in July Milbank's vote had increased by over 1,500 and he was elected top of the poll.[48]

V Grass roots conservatism

[44] *Leeds Times*, 28 January 1865, p. 5.
[45] *Leeds Mercury*, 8 February 1865, p. 2.
[46] *Western Times*, 15 December 1868, p.6.
[47] *Gloucester Journal*, 18 July 1868, p.5.
[48] *Leeds Mercury*, 20 April 1865, p. 3.

This and the following section contain the results of a new survey of the development of Conservative working men's clubs using available evidence from a study of regional and specialist newspapers and archival sources containing evidence on grass roots Conservatism during this period (further details of these sources are given below). This work suggests these associations were far more widespread much earlier than previously thought. The subsequent sections seek to analyse the ways in which local Conservative organisations developed and communicated 'working class Conservatism' by examining the content of local debate, its language and its imagery. This approach uses the available evidence of the activities of the associations to demonstrate their importance in the development of political rhetoric and examines examples of speeches and articles in the *British Lion*, a newspaper launched at this time solely to support the development of working class Conservatism. It also examines the imagery of the movement often expressed in hall decorations and the social events often organised by the associations. In addition to developing an understanding of the creation of popular Conservatism in this period what follows seeks to provide a wider understanding of the operation of party organisation predicated less on the 'mechanics' of electoral sociology whilst also acknowledging the importance of party organisation in the development of policy and political rhetoric.

Conservative working men's associations have received a variable review in the historical literature. Cornford rather disparagingly referred to the Conservative party organisation in 1868 as:

> the party's election machinery, so far as it existed, was in the hands of his [the leader's] solicitors, who attempted at election time to coordinate the activities of the motley array of Constitutional Clubs, registration societies, and Workingmen's Conservative Associations unevenly distributed about the country.[49]

In addition, more recent work has shown how the relative dearth of available records can severely hamper further research further.[50]

Nevertheless, local political organisations and associations as well as working men's clubs and constitutional associations had been in existence in various forms and with various purposes well before the 1870s. Certainly, after the Conservative's electoral defeat of 1865, Lord Nevill decided to increase the number of local Conservative

[49] Cornford, 'The Transformation Of Conservatism', p. 42.
[50] Windscheffel, *The·Making of London Conservatism*, p. 88.

associations concerned with registering electors and bringing them to the polls.[51] Conservative associations and clubs were, as a result, arguably a well-established part of the popular political landscape at least by 1872. Despite these developments the potentially significant influence of these associations on the development of Conservative ideology has received little attention from historians. There has also been little attention to the numbers, dates of formation, size and extent of these organisations leading to potentially serious underestimates of their numbers and how early they were formed. Feuchtwanger remarked that 'in 1867 many Working Men's Associations were founded', but did not give any suggestions for numbers, nor whether he meant exclusively Conservative working men's associations.[52] The *Examiner* estimated there were in excess of 800 Conservative associations in England and Wales in 1877 and that 400 of them had been formed before 1872.[53] Hanham was more prudent in his estimates and suggested that, by 1874 there were at least 150 Conservative working men's associations, spread over 50 boroughs in five counties and that the major growth in these associations took place from the mid-seventies onward.[54] Hanham's work was based, in part, on the early records of the NUCCA which indeed show a steady increase in membership from 289 associations in 1871 to 472 in 1875. However, the NUCCA records are an unreliable estimate of the total number of clubs because only some Conservative working men's associations were affiliated to the organisation, either on their formation or later. Cox and Hanham suggest that no earlier figures are available but evidence of their existence can be ascertained from other sources.[55] In order to consider this issue, and the apparent lack of other available evidence on these associations, research was undertaken covering the years from 1860 to 1870 to attempt to establish the numbers and locations of Conservative working men's associations extant during this period.

Several sources were used in this research. A complete textual search for references to Conservative working men's associations was made of all the available copies of 178

[51] Layton-Henry, 'Democracy and Reform', p. 656.
[52] Feuchtwanger, *Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party*, p. 191.
[53] *Era*, 2 June 1877.
[54] Hanham, *Elections*, p. 106 and pp. 103-4, where the chronology of building of clubs in Bolton from 1870 onwards 'seems fairly typical'.
[55] The numbers of organisations affiliated to the NUCCA were 1871: 289; 1872: 348; 1873: 407; 1874: 447; 1875: 472 (including 228 branch associations). These figures are taken from Cox, *The Efficient Secret*, p. 43, footnote 3.

British newspapers published between 1860 and 1880.[56] The results of this investigation provided the principal source for the survey. In addition, a number of other searches were made to seek to complement and support this work. Firstly, a search was made of catalogued local archives to find any references to local Conservative associations and the date of their establishment.[57] Secondly, the first available Conservative party list of associations of 1874 was reviewed to establish which associations had been formed prior to 1870.[58] These surveys reveal that Conservative Associations were far more extensive than has previously been thought and that there were at least 280 of these associations in existence before the general election of 1868 covering the majority of the English boroughs.

This view is supported by other contemporary evidence. This suggests that the development of Conservative grassroots organisation must be dated earlier than the standard model implies. The *London Review*, for example, noted that Conservatives were 'extremely jubilant over the working men's Constitutional Associations, which are fulfilling so admirably one of the main objects of their existence by enabling Cabinet Ministers to make triumphant speeches in all parts of the country'.[59] Two years later, in June 1869, a deputation from the NUCCA visited Lord Derby in order to urge the opposition of the House of Lords to Gladstone's Irish Church Bill with addresses from 104 Conservative working men's associations.[60]

The distribution of these associations showed how they were being used to target the working-class vote. Overall, of the total 183 borough constituencies in England some 92 had Conservative working men's institutions by 1869. This conceals, however, some wide variations. Of the largest borough constituencies, taken to be those with an electorate in 1874 of more than 7,500, some 42 of the total of 47 of such constituencies had Conservative working men's institutions by 1869. This is perhaps unsurprising since the majority of the 'target audience', that is to say the newly

[56] The database is published by published by brightsolid Newspaper Archive Limited and the British Library and is available at http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/. A listing of the newspapers searched is included in Appendix III.

[57] The National Archives database at http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/ was searched for 'conservative working men's association' and variations thereto on dates between 1 October 2012 and 6 March 2013. The summary information given for entries satisfying the criteria was used to ascertain, if possible, whether the association was in existence before 1 December 1868. If this was not possible the entry was further investigated to ascertain this information.

[58] A list of the constituencies in which the associations identified were located is contained in the Appendix III.

[59] Conservative Agents and Associations in the Boroughs and Counties of England and Wales (1874). Published by the Central Conservative Office.

[60] *London Standard*, 8 June 1869.

enfranchised workers, were to be found in these constituencies. There was little difference between the northern and southern boroughs with equal saturation in each category.

If the larger boroughs had a near 100% coverage of Conservative working men's associations, the medium sized boroughs had less. This category, defined here as those with an electorate in 1874 of between 1,500 and 7,500, had a more mixed coverage. Of the 79 such boroughs 43 had a Conservative working men's institution. The coverage was slightly higher in the south where 57% of the boroughs had such organisations compared to 51% in the north. Finally, the smaller constituencies with electorates in 1874 of less 1500, had little coverage with only 7 associations recorded in 57 constituencies. Most of these constituencies (44) were located in the south where the Conservative borough strength was higher and the impact of the extension of the franchise had been lower.

The expansion in numbers and geographical spread of Conservative working men's associations is further revealed in the pages of the *British Lion*. The *British Lion* was a one penny weekly paper published on a Saturday which was formed in 1867 by H C Raikes who had also founded the *Imperial Review* and was a supporter of Disraeli's concept of popular conservatism.[61] Its first issue was on 29th June 1867 and it ceased publication in July 1868.[62] The paper provides an interesting case study in the Conservative aspiration to communicate their message to the working classes in this period as well as providing a good deal of information on working men's constitutional associations. Its inaugural issue on 29th June 1867 recorded that:

> For some months past the addition to our newspaper literature of a cheap weekly Conservative journal has been contemplated. It was felt that the great principles of Constitutionalism, as enunciated by the party now at the head of national affairs, are deficient in press representation among the masses'.[63] The intention, it was stated, was 'to render this journal a thoroughly efficient Conservative organ, and an entertaining, instructive general newspaper, suitable for all ranks of the people'. It went on to say 'we identify ourselves with the Working Men's Constitutional Associations and their collateral branches'.[64]

[61] *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 25 June 1867. Raikes was one of a group of young men, which included Gorst, supportive of Disraeli's ideas and who supported Lord Nevill in his organisational efforts. See Smith, *Disraelian Conservatism*, p. 117.
[62] This is the last copy held by the British Library and there are no further references to the newspaper in other journals.
[63] *British Lion*, 29 June 1867.
[64] Ibid, 29 June 1867.

The paper went on to assert 'these associations are based on a sound foundation and in every way calculated to promote the unity of action which will enable working men to improve their mental, social and physical condition' and also recognised that the 'momentous necessity of exercising well-timed vigilance on the Registration of Voters will be kept in view'. [65] This was consistent with its advertisements in which it proclaimed itself as the only London weekly penny constitutional journal and as the faithful representative of Conservative Working Men expounding true constitutional principles with peculiar lucidity and firmness, yet without acrimony.[66] The paper certainly remained true to its claims in its extensive reporting of the foundation and meetings of Conservative working men's associations.

The launch of the paper was concerning enough to the opposition to provoke some scathing reactions in the Liberal press with, for instance, the *Bury Times* asserting that it 'roars like any suckling dove' and 'will be apparently (for a very short time) a very feeble defender of Conservative institutions'.[67] The publication certainly did not show great longevity and ceased publication in 1868. It nevertheless provides a valuable insight into the development of popular Conservatism at this time and a unique record of the extensive development of Conservative Working Men's Associations in this period.

The expansion in the numbers and political significance of these working-class organisations was also marked by the creation of NUCCA in 1867. An initial meeting was held on 29 April 1867 of a number of representatives of Conservative Associations in London 'with a view to forming a union in the interests of the Conservative party, and as a means of uniting and communicating with the Conservative associations already formed, or in the course of formation, in various parts of the country'.[68] J. E. Gorst, then the member for Cambridge attended and noted that 'the object of the Conservative Union which they desired to form was to unite and establish a system of intercommunication with all the Conservative associations of the country'.[69] Amongst the union's objectives was the desire:

> To afford a centre of communication and action between local associations supporting constitutional views. There is, of course, no intention to interfere in any way with local action; the object of the union is to strengthen the hands of local associations where

[65] Ibid, 29 June 1867.
[66] See for instance *Nottinghamshire Guardian*,13 December 1867.
[67] *Bury Times*, 6 July 1867. Another example was the *Kentish Chronicle*, 6 July 1867.
[68] *Standard*, 30 April 1867.
[69] Ibid, 30 April 1867.

> existing in their respective districts, and to encourage the establishment of associations in districts where they are wanting; and to further organise associations by the holding of meetings for the general expression and diffusion of constitutional principles and the dissemination of sound information upon topics of general political interest, and to secure the combined action of all constitutional associations.[70]

Another of the objectives was that:

> Each borough should have its Conservative association with its own separate officers, and the whole of those associations in a county should be placed under one head, there being a president for every county. Then the whole of the county associations so formed should be united together and identified with the union. The party would then have a vast and important machinery, which they could set to work in four and twenty hours over the whole of the country whenever a dissolution of parliament occurred, or whenever an effort was necessary for the maintenance of the institutions of the country, or for retaining the government in office.[71]

The centralising instincts of the representatives of some 60 Conservative associations across the country were plain. Later in the day a delegation of the representatives met with the Prime Minister who praised Disraeli's efforts on the Reform Bill.[72]

It is interesting that there was the prolonged and heated discussion over the name for the society. It was originally proposed that the name be changed to 'The National Association of Constitutional Associations' thus omitting the reference to conservatism in order to provide a wider title under which 'their objects could be more effectually carried on'.[73] This was eventually overturned and the compromise of the final name achieved by including the word Conservative. It is noteworthy that the most vociferous of the delegates in support of this change came from Northern borough associations and the debate reproduced discussions which had taken place on the formation of many local associations.

Although NUCCA itself was not a working men's association it contributed to the formation of more of these associations. Leonard Sedgwick, the first secretary of the National Union, together with a number of volunteers, spent most of 1868 travelling the country in order to explain how Conservative Working Men's Associations could best be formed'.[74] H. E. Gorst wrote a biography of Disraeli in which he described the Conservative challenge in 1870 after the defeat of 1868. He wrote:

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[70] Ibid, 13 November 1867.
[71] Ibid, 30 April 1867.
[72] *Era*, 5 May 1867.
[73] *Standard*, 13 November 1867.
[74] Hanham, *Elections*, p. 106.

> The first step to be taken was the organisation of local committees in the towns and county divisions…arrangements were made to meet the most influential local Conservatives at each place, and to persuade them to form a committee for the purpose of propagating Conservative principles and arranging about a local candidate. These committees, when once they had been established, rapidly grew into Conservative associations. Intelligent working-men were easily persuaded to join them, and they are now known everywhere by the common appellation "Conservative Working-Men's Associations".[75]

Harold Gorst was, of course, J. E. Gorst's son and was writing in 1900 sometime after the legend of the senior Gorst's impact on Conservative party organisation had been established. It suggests that the development of Conservative party organisation was very largely due to his policies and efforts. However, as has been shown, the number of Conservative organisations in existence before 1872 was very much greater than previously thought and certainly, more than the numbers suggested in Harold Gorst's panegyric for his father. It may well have taken some time for already established organisations to decide to join NUCCA and Gorst's trips to the constituencies may have been equally targeted at persuading organisations to join the organisation as opposed to initiating the creation of new organisations.

The extent and importance of Conservative working men's associations was also shown by their strong presence in various regions. The strength of working-class Conservatism in Lancashire has been well documented and unsurprisingly most borough constituencies in that area had such associations. The borough constituencies in East Anglia also provide an example of Conservative strength in the boroughs and an interesting corrective to the assumption that the Reform Act was to be universally detrimental to the Conservatives.[76] At the 1868 general election they had returned 6 of the 14 members and at the 1874 general election they nearly swept the board, returning 13 of the 14 members and with the Liberals only managing to retain a seat in Norwich. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that local Conservatives had recognised the potential of Conservative Working Men's Associations for the area. The *Essex Standard*, a Conservative newspaper, commented on how these associations 'ought to be introduced in all large towns' and 'it is to be regretted that they have not found their way into this county, where so many Conservative working men are to be found' and by 1869 a Conservative working man's club had been established in all but two of the

[75] Gorst, *The Earl of Beaconsfield* p. 126.
[76] The borough constituencies in East Anglia for these purposes are Bury St. Edmunds, Cambridge City, Colchester, Eye, Harwich, Huntingdon, Ipswich, King's Lynn and Norwich.

constituencies.[77] Despite this in Colchester the *Essex Standard* thought that the Liberals had been better organised and the Conservatives still had much to do, they had:

> Fought manfully, and are entitled to the full enjoyment of their present triumph. In point of organisation, though not of exertion and courage, they have shown themselves superior to the Conservatives, and they have taken care to allow no influence, which might be made available to secure a single vote, to lie dormant.[78]

Again, the closeness of the vote in Colchester made it apparent that large numbers of the newly enfranchised working class had voted Conservative and the paper strongly argued for the formation of a working men's Conservative Association. It said that:

> Once before we pointed out the necessity of a Working Men's Constitutional Association to form a nucleus, and to concentrate the valuable assistance which might be obtained from the large number of Conservative working men in the Borough at such a time as this. It was in this respect that our opponents showed themselves superior to us in organisation. We do not, by any means, undervalue the excellent spirit and unremitting exertions of the True Blue Club, and of the Junior Conservative Club. Both have worked bravely and well, and are deserving of all praise, but something more is required. Working men are a gregarious class. They understand best, and they naturally like best, men of their own stamp and status in society. There are a good many working men in the Borough who, in their earnestness and in their ability to advocate and defend their principles, are second to none of their rank in the kingdom. These have worked hard during the Election in connexion with the two Clubs which we have named, and their services have been invaluable. They have not, however, yet been encouraged to take upon themselves the advocacy of Conservative principles upon the platform, and have been too much accustomed to lean upon those above them, instead of trusting to themselves. We would venture to recommend to the Conservative party that a Working Man's Club should immediately be formed, to consist only of working men.[79]

The paper went on to discuss the importance of such an organisation in the mediation of ideas and rhetoric when it suggested that 'the leading Conservatives of the Borough, and others from a distance, might from time to time be requested to give them lectures upon the great questions of the day. They should also be supplied with sound information on those points upon which they are most likely to be misled by self-interested agitators and demagogues'.[80]

As we have seen the increase in the electorate in many boroughs meant that 'organisational effort became still more vital' especially in the tasks of registration and canvassing, in getting party supporters out to vote and in managing the distribution of

[77] *Essex Standard and General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties*, 13 November 1869.
[78] Ibid, 20 November 1868.
[79] Ibid, 20 November 1868.
[80] Ibid, 20 November 1868.

electors' votes in constituencies where the minority clause was operative.[81] Conservative working men's associations could provide vital support in these areas. A good example was the Huddersfield Working Men's Conservative Association which reported to its members after the 1868 general election that working men's Conservative associations had 'contributed, in no small degree, to the measure of success that had attended Conservatism during the recent elections' and 'they might congratulate themselves that so large a proportion of the working men had shown their sympathy with the principle of the constitution and the association which existed between Church and State'.[82] The leaders of the Association had 'found in working men who volunteered their services far more efficient persons than they had found amongst paid canvassers'.[83] Assistance with the canvass was a particularly important area and in Westminster during the run-up to the 1868 election the disparate groups of Liberal supporters of J. S. Mill were forced to unite in their canvassing effort as a direct result of the 'great efforts being made by the Conservative Working Men's Association in Westminster.[84]

The success of the Huddersfield Association at the 1868 election led it to expand its responsibilities and activities so that a committee appointed to conduct the registration should immediately be brought under the wing of the association; that there should be one central association for municipal and parliamentary purposes, with branch associations in the several wards; and that each ward should send representatives to the council of the central association. Particular emphasis was placed on the necessity for the creation of ward organisations because the constituency had an electorate of some 11,000 voters and 'it was an utter impossibility that one association could do much' with that many voters.[85] The extent of the development of the electoral organisational responsibilities of Conservative working men's associations can be seen from these decisions. Exeter was a classic bell-weather constituency of the period, returning two Liberals in 1868, two Conservatives in 1874 and a member from each party in 1880. The Reform Act had doubled Exeter's electorate from 3,000 to 6,000 and the 1868 general election saw a very close contest with the second Liberal winning by a margin of only 66 votes, equivalent to a majority sensitivity percentage of only

[81] Smith, *Disraelian Conservatism*, p. 116.
[82] *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 December 1868.
[83] Ibid, 12 December 1868.
[84] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 July 1868.
[85] *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 12 December 1868.

3.6% on a turnout of 72%.These facts, together with the very close contest in 1864 under the previous franchise, suggest that contemporary analysis was correct in suggesting that the Conservatives gained a good deal of support from the newly enfranchised working men in 1868.[86] Indeed, contemporary reports noted the significant organisational effort by the Conservative Committees during the three months preceding the election and the role that the Exeter Conservative Working Men's Association played in that effort.[87]

Candidate selection was another area in which working men's associations were highly influential. In 1868 the Ipswich Conservative Working Men's Association selected J. R. Bulwer as a Conservative candidate which led the sitting member, J. P. Cobbold, to decline to come forward as a Conservative candidate on the ground that the Association was likely to stand in his way rather than assist him.[88] In the event Bulwer stood down and Cobbold stood as the single Conservative candidate but the influence of the association had been registered. Similarly at Bristol there was a particularly active association and the nomination of the Conservative candidate was seconded by the chairman of the constituency's Conservative Working Men's Institution and at Wakefield in 1868 the Conservative Working Men's Association selected the Conservative candidate for the forthcoming elections.[89]

VI Language, imagery and culture

The first section of this chapter argued that party organisation should be seen and investigated as much more than the mechanistic and centralised organisation of potential party supporters. Not only was party organisation not wholly mechanistic but it was not wholly centralised'. Further, the role of parties in intermediating the rhetoric of politics meant that the language and symbols which they used were as important in carrying the message which was developed between party and supporters as the ideas which they were to represent. This role and the consequent development of the Conservative appeal to working class voters together with its language and mode of

[86] *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 20 November 1868.
[87] Ibid, 20 November 1868. Ibid, 20 November 1868. Page 6 reports the inaugural meeting of the Exeter Working Men's Conservative Union was held on Saturday 14 November 1868 immediately prior to the election the following week.
[88] *Norfolk News*, 24 October 1868; *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 19 November 1868.
[89] *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 19 November 1868.

expression can be clearly seen in the formation and activities of Conservative working men's associations in the 1860s.

References to the constitution were a fundamental descriptor which linked core Conservative values and policies. Vernon has argued that the discourse of popular constitutionalism represented the 'master narrative of English politics' in the nineteenth century.[90] The party itself was sometimes referred to the Constitutional Party and working men's associations set up by Conservative supporters were often called Working Men's Constitutional Associations. No mention was made of 'conservative', sometimes on the grounds that this might discourage working men from joining. A frequent compromise was to call the associations 'Conservative and Constitutional Associations'.[91] Constitutional associations were aptly defined by W. R. Callendar, credited with the organisational rebuilding of the Conservative party in south east Lancashire[92], who said 'by constitutional associations was meant associations to conserve the present order of government by Queen, Lords and Commons, to preserve the connection between Church and State, and to promote the happiness of the people, at home and their national honour abroad'.[93] This definition provides a clear association of the Conservative appeal with patriotism and a strong foreign policy which identified the 'national honour abroad' with the honour of the 'people'.[94]

Another frequent reference to values and policies was the introduction of mentions of the church in an association's title. Thus, at Ashton-under-Lyne a Conservative working men's association was formed in January 1866 and given the title of the Ashton-under-Lyne Working Men's Church and Conservative Association. The founders thought that it was 'an undeniable and admitted fact that the constitution of our country is a wise and good one, well calculated to provide against the exercise of tyrannical power on the one hand, and against the insubordination of democratic principles on the other. They went on to explain that they included the reference to the

[90] Vernon, *Politics*, pp. 296-297.
[91] Some examples are: the Goole Conservative Constitutional Society in the Eastern Division of the West Riding (1868); the Gloucester Conservative and Constitutional Association (1868); the Newbury Constitutional Union (1868); the Newbury and Speenhamland District Constitutional Union (1868); the Crewe Constitutional Union (1868); the Nottingham and District Working Men's Constitutional Association (1868); the Kirkburton Conservative and Constitutional Association (1868).
[92] A. C. Howe, 'Callender, William Romaine (1825–1876)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39657, accessed 17 March 2012]
[93] *British Lion*, 29 June 1867.
[94] See also Chapter III.

church in the title of the association because they were fully satisfied that, under the protection of the national Church, this country had maintained her glorious position in the scale of nations, and had prospered in a degree unexampled in the history of any other nation, either ancient or modern'.[95] The members of the Bradford Working Men's Conservative Association required each new member to make a declaration 'which stated their determination to maintain the tried and ancient principles of the constitution and, while avowing their readiness to promote the reform of proved abuses, they held it to be their bounden duty to maintain intact the union of Church and State'.[96]

The chairman of the Huddersfield Working Men's Conservative Association addressed a meeting of the association and asked what it meant to be a Conservative and whether it was possible for a working man to be a Conservative. He said he believed all the working men of England were essentially and really Conservative, and Conservatism meant 'to maintain the great institutions of this country, attachment to the throne, the upholding of the Established Church'.[97]

The defence of the established church in the defence of the constitution was a pervasive theme in Conservative rhetoric. The object of the Bradford Working Men's Conservative Association was 'the defence of the constitution from unwarranted changes' and at their inaugural meeting in November 1866 'Church and State' was one of the slogans on banners that decorated the hall filled with 420 attendees. [98]

Conservative working men in Portsmouth covered a number of angles by calling themselves the Portsmouth Working Men's Liberal-Conservative Association, although there was no doubt from the sentiments expressed at their dinner in 1867, attended by 500 working men, that they were truly Tory.[99] Perhaps because the city was such a Liberal stronghold the Conservative working men in Birmingham indulged in some similar hedging by calling themselves the 'Birmingham Working Men's Liberal-Conservative Association'.[100] Similarly, the Walsall association, founded in May 1868, called themselves the 'Walsall Liberal-Conservative Association'.[101] Sometimes the phrase 'working men' was omitted from the title. In June 1867 an

[95] *Standard*, 24 January 1866.
[96] Ibid, 7 February 1867.
[97] *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 1 December 1866.
[98] *Bradford Observer*, 22 November 1866.
[99] *Standard*, 15 February 1867.
[100] *British Lion*, 30 May 1868.
[101] Ibid, 23 May 1868.

association was formed in Grantham leaving out this reference but clearly displaying its protestant connection by calling itself the 'Grantham Protestant Conservative Association'. There was no doubt, however, that its intended targets were working men since its purpose was described as 'affording those who are about to come onto the register an opportunity of forming a proper estimate of the political situation'.[102] The imagery of working class Conservatism was also important. As the *Blackburn Standard* reported 'the banner of the [Blackburn] Central Working Men's Conservative club was much admired. It was a large square banner of blue silk, with an orange fringe. On the one side was a bust of the Earl of Derby, and over this were the words, "A heart noble, and a mind determined". On the reverse side was a representation of constitutionalist's and churchman's emblems, the Bible, the mace and the crown. The flag itself was mounted upon two large staffs surmounted with representations of the Bible and the crown'.[103] The themes of leadership, the established church and the crown made frequent appearances in Conservative imagery, as they did in the Conservative political message to the working classes. Thus, when, in September 1868, a Conservative Working Men's Club was set up at Livesay, Blackburn, some 400 people attended a social function to celebrate its inauguration. The press reports noted that the flag of the association bore the motto 'The Church, the Throne, and the Cottage'.[104] For the *British Lion* newspaper the visual representation of Conservative appeals to the newly enfranchised was encapsulated in the masthead of the new newspaper with a Landseer lion guarding the crown and representations of truth and justice.

Similarly, the Kidderminster Conservative Working Men's Association held its quarterly meeting on 23 August 1868 and at this meeting 'a handsome banner' which had recently been purchased was displayed for the members. The Chairman noted to cheers that 'in the emblems they had on the flag one of the Church, the Queen, and the People, they had at once the chief objects for which an Englishman, lived, strove, and if necessary, to die'.[105] Mass celebrations could also have religious connotations so that on the death of the Earl of Derby in 1869 the Conservative Working Men's

[102] Ibid, 6 June 1867.
[103] *Blackburn Standard*, 28 October 1868. This article also gives the descriptions of the banners and names of numerous Blackburn Conservative Associations.
[104] *Standard*, 25 September 1868.
[105] *Berrow's Worcester Journal* , 29 August 1868.

Association of Manchester organised a 'sermon to be preached' and 'at least a thousand working men marched in solemn procession to the church'.[106]

Conservative working men's clubs were in some ways the unrecognised precursors of the Primrose League and carried out some of the activities of the League twenty years before has been commonly supposed. The importance of social occasions to the formation of working class political support for the Conservatives was frequently demonstrated during this period. One example was the Liverpool Working Men's Conservative Association which organised a picnic for a Saturday in August 1868. The event took place in Knowsley Park, the ancestral home of the Earls of Derby and special trains were laid on to convey the invitees to their destination. Later in the evening the crowd approached the hall to cheer the Earl who acknowledged the compliment by approaching at the windows.[107] Similarly the formation of the Working Men's Conservative Association of Stourport in September 1868 was celebrated in some style with the attendance of members of the Constitutional Associations of Kidderminster and Bewdley marching with their banners and the Kidderminster Brass Band. Some two to three thousand people were estimated to have attended the event.[108]

VII Conclusions

Historical study of party organisation in this period has tended towards a focus on central party organisation and the place of organisation in high politics. To some extent this has been the result of the influence of electoral sociology which saw the main purpose of party organisation in mobilising a party's supporters who were already predisposed to vote in the way they did. This has led to the neglect of the study of how parties sought to gain support and interact with the electorate together with the rhetoric and symbols which they used to do this. Local organisations were crucial in achieving interaction with individual voters but have been neglected because of this. This chapter has sought to show that both local Liberal registration associations and local Conservative working men's associations were much more widespread than previously thought, especially in those larger constituencies where there were substantial increases in the working-class electorate. It has also sought to show that these associations were involved in practical organisational issues such as canvassing and

[106] *Essex Standard and General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties*, 12 November 1869.
[107] *Liverpool Mercury*, 10 August 1868.
[108] *Berrow's Worcester Journal* , 12 September 1868.

candidate selection. In addition, it has shown that Conservative working men's associations were also important in developing the Conservative appeal to the new electors through the party's emphasis on the defence of the constitution, the protection of the established church, patriotism and a strong foreign policy.

Chapter V - By-elections

I Introduction

Between the general elections of 1868 and 1880 by-elections were a central part of the political landscape. They were important as indicators of the general political mood of the nation and they were significant guides to the electors' approval or disapproval of the policies of the government and opposition. There were no opinion polls conducted in Victorian Britain but by-elections were often treated and interpreted in a similar way. They were important to politicians, the press and other commentators who often took them as guides to the prospects of the parties. As a result many were vigorously contested and received nationwide publicity in the press. Leading political figures considered them highly relevant as potential indicators of how the electorate might vote at a general election.[1] As discussed in Section IV of this chapter recent by-election results were used in both 1874 and 1880 as signal factors in the timing of the dissolution of Parliament and the calling of a general election. By-elections could also have a significant effect on Westminster politics. From 1870 to the general election of 1874 the Conservatives won 23 seats at by-elections compared to two Liberal wins. This series of victories had started in August 1871 when the Conservatives won East Surrey for the first time since 1841 and the electoral reaction against Gladstone's first ministry gathered pace well into 1873 when nine Liberal seats were lost. This affected the government's performance and, as Hawkins put it, 'this haemorrhaging of electoral support drained the life blood of the ministry'.[2]

The passing of the Ballot Act meant that by-elections held from August 1872 to January 1874 also became laboratories of electoral reform because they were the first elections held in Great Britain under the requirements of that Act. We have seen in Chapters II and IV the important role they played giving insights and experience to politicians, party agents, managers and electors on how to respond to the new electoral environment. They gave rise to the development of new techniques for party agents and managers and influenced the great debates on the efficacy of the legislation in

[1] See Otte and Readman (eds), *By-elections in British Politics*, pp. 1-21.
[2] Hawkins, *British Party Politics*, p. 170.

achieving its intended impact on bribery and undue influence. These by-elections also showed how the conduct of nominations and polling changed dramatically with more orderly procedures replacing the previous public spectacles, leading contemporaries to comment on the order and quiet of the process. These changes gave rise to the development of other modes of public expression through political meetings, crowds at polling stations and at the proclamation of the result and these too became apparent at these by-elections.[3] It was also in this period that by-elections became national events. As we have seen, the revolutionary widening of the electorate by the 1867 Reform Act and the expansion of the use of the electric telegraph transformed British electoral politics in this period. As a result the by-election campaigns and results were reported in newspapers across the nation.

Despite the importance of by-elections to the electoral politics of the period, these elections have received very little attention from historians. Hanham does not mention by-elections[4] and Dunbabin's focus was to use them to chart the changes in party support between successive pairs of general elections in this period (and subsequently) by calculating the parties' share of the vote in by-elections.[5] A substantial contribution to remedying this deficiency has very recently been made by Otte and Readman's *By-Elections in British Politics*.[6] The following sections attempt to contribute further information and analyses to this renewed attention to the subject.

The first part of the chapter gives details of the by-elections in this period including the reasons for their occurrence and their results. Next, the predictive ability of by-elections is considered by comparing the results of contested by-elections in the periods prior to the general elections of 1874 and 1880 to the subsequent results at the general election. The importance of by-elections to politicians is demonstrated by showing how their results were a significant part of the political decision-making process. The importance of the contests to electors is considered by examining the turnout at these contests and the degree of political activity which was apparent from press reports of by-election campaigns. The development of the national nature of by-elections during the period is analysed by considering the extent of coverage which they received in the press, the nature of the issues which were of importance in the by-election campaigns and the participation of leading political figures and central party

[3] Vernon, *Politics*, p.158.
[4] Hanham, *Elections*.
[5] Dunbabin, 'Parliamentary Elections in Great Britain'.
[6] Otte and Readman (eds), *By-elections in British Politics*.

organisations in those contests. The frequency and interaction of all these factors are then illustrated by an assessment of the by-elections which occurred in the 18 months after the revelation in June 1876 of the Bulgarian atrocities. Finally, the importance which contemporaries attached to by-elections is illustrated by reviewing a dispute over the measurement of the significance of by-election results that was conducted in 1875 between Gladstone and the Conservative Central Office in the pages of the leading national and provincial newspapers. Firstly a broad survey of by-elections during the period sets the background for these further considerations.

II Numbers of by-elections, causes and swings

There were 285 by-elections between the general elections of 1868 and 1880. The death of the incumbent member was the most important single cause, giving rise to 87 elections. In this period it was still necessary for MPs appointed to certain offices under the Crown to submit themselves for re-election and, since the elections of 1868 and 1874 both produced changes in government, a significant number of by-elections arose for this reason.[7] The other major causes were the admission of a member to the House of Lords, either by appointment or succession, and resignation, which was of course to some extent under the influence of the government. Finally, the general elections in this period gave rise to a number of petitions and 25 of the associated legal trials resulted in an order to re-run the election, which have been treated as by-elections for the purposes of the analyses in this chapter.

It had been the general practice of the parties not to challenge the incumbent at ministerial by-elections and over the period 1832 to 1866 only 14% were contested.[8] From 1868 to 1880, however, 11 (16.6%) of the 66 ministerial by-elections were contested and, interestingly, 4 of these contests were in the period 1871-73 when the Gladstone administration was in electoral and political difficulties, losing 23 by-elections. Although the government did not lose any of these contests they suggest a degree of ruthlessness in the new Conservative organisational structure masterminded by Disraeli and Gorst. They were prepared to break with existing conventions and to fight these elections when the political climate seemed to offer potential prospects of

[7] There were 67 in the period with 18 in 1868/9 and 24 in 1874. See also M. Pugh, ''Queen Anne is dead': The Abolition of Ministerial By-Elections, 1867–1926', *Parliamentary History*, 21 (2002), 351-366.
[8] See Hawkins, 'Government Appointment By-Elections'.

success or the result could be used to further demonstrate the unpopularity of the administration and its policies.

Overall, of the 285 by-elections during the period, 169 (59%) were contested. These contests provided valuable information on the state of public opinion and the changes in electoral support for the parties. Tables V/1 and V/2 present the swings of electoral support between the parties, as shown by contested by-elections in each of the years between 1868 and 1880, together with the number of seats gained or lost. These swings are the changes in the average share of the Conservative vote in that year compared to the previous general election.[9]

Table V-1 Swing to the Conservatives between 1868 and 1874

Year	Weighted Average Swing	Conservative Gains and (Losses) (net)
1868	1.05%	-
1869	3.34%	3
1870	2.24%	5
1871	-1.59%	5
1872	0.11%	5
1873	6.74%*	10†
General Election	7.5%	

Sources and Notes: Based on the election statistics computed in accordance with Appendix I. The swing is the change in the Conservative share of the vote and the average over the by-elections is weighted by the electorate of the constituency concerned. Negative figures represent a swing to the Liberals.
Dunbabin provided similar information in his article. It has not been possible to reproduce his results but as discussed in Appendix I the above figures provide a more accurate reflection of the statistics.
* This includes by-elections held in January 1874 immediately before the general election. Taken separately the swings were 1873 – 4.35% and 1874 – 16.12%.
† Includes Stroud which was won on 8 January 1874, before the 1874 General Election.

The pattern of the results in Table V/1 provides a clear illustration of how by-elections reflected the political mood of their time and, in this period, their power to predict the result of general elections. In the thirteen months prior to the 1874 general election the

[9] There is a full discussion of the measurement of electoral swing and the averaging of by-election results in Appendix I to this thesis dealing with multi-member constituencies and the calculation of psephological statistics.

average swing to the Conservatives in by-elections was 6.74% and at the general election itself it was 7.5%.

Table V-2 Swing to the Conservatives between 1874 and 1880

Year	Weighted Average Swing	Conservative Gains and (Losses) (net)
1874	-0.41%	5
1875	-4.75%	1
1876	-1.85%	-
1877	-2.48%	1
1878	0.52%	1
1879	-5.27%	-
1880	0.26%	1
1879/80*	-0.60%	1
General Election	-4.80%	
Sources and Notes: Based on the election statistics computed in accordance with Appendix I. The swing is the change in the Conservative share of the vote and the average over the by-elections is weighted by the electorate of the constituency concerned. Negative figures represent a swing to the Liberals. * The figures for 1879/80 include those held in the 1879 calendar year plus the 3 by-elections (Liverpool, Barnstaple and Southwark) held in February before the general election.		

The trend of results in the by-elections between 1874 and 1880 needs to be approached with rather more caution particularly in interpreting their predictive ability in respect of the 1880 general election result. The period from 1874 to 1877 showed a relatively consistent swing against the Conservatives.[10] The subsequent years from 1878 to 1880 encompassed the electoral impact of the Eastern Question and resulted in a number of swings back and forth in political fortunes as is more fully discussed below. Of particular interest for the present purposes of considering the predictive power of by-elections however, are the contests in the 14 months leading up to the cabinet's

[10] Hicks appears to take a slightly different view. He terms the period 1874-77 as one of 'Conservative decline' but thinks an analysis of the electoral situation after the Conservatives had been nearly two years in power suggests neither significant discontent with the new government nor that the opposition was making any noticeable advance. Geoffrey Hicks, "'We should have had 1,000": The By-elections of the 1874 Parliament.', in Thomas Otte and Paul Readman (eds), *By-elections in British Politics, 1832-1914*, (Woodbridge, 2013), 77-98, pp. 6-8. The table above suggests there was a Liberal advance in this period.

decision to dissolve on 6 March 1880. In the 1879 calendar year the weighted average swing to the Liberals was 5.3%, remarkably close to the general election outcome of 4.8%. However, there were only three contested by-elections in this period which had also been contested in 1874 so that a comparison could be made to gauge changes in support for the parties, and the result is heavily affected by the 10% swing to the Liberals at Canterbury in May.

Closer to the general election there was a contest at Sheffield on the 21 December 1879 where a Conservative candidate polled very respectably gaining 49.1% of the vote. No Conservative had stood in Sheffield in 1874 so it was not possible to compute any swing but the result could be regarded as encouraging since the Conservatives had not thought the seat worth contesting in 1874. In February 1880 there were contests at Barnstaple, Liverpool and Southwark. At Liverpool a Conservative was returned with only a small swing to the Liberals of 1% whilst at Southwark the Conservative captured the seat with a swing of 2.4% to the Conservatives. There seems little doubt that the results at Sheffield, Liverpool and Southwark heavily influenced Disraeli's decision to dissolve in March.[11] These results and the wholly different outcome of the general election provide a salutary reminder that in analysing the predictive power of by-elections a number of factors need to be taken into account. The representative nature of the results needs consideration – there were only three contests in 1879 compared to 20 in 1873. In addition, there was no real basis to assess the Conservative performance at Sheffield as an indicator of national sentiment because no Conservative had stood in 1874. In fact, at the general election there was a small swing to the Conservatives of 0.4%, which meant that the by-election had been a good predictor of the constituency's general election result. The Liberals were not concerned by the Southwark result which they put down to the weakness of their candidate.[12] At Liverpool particular local factors came into play. The Liberals lost because Ramsay, the Liberal candidate, had sought to gain the Irish vote by stating he would support an enquiry into home rule but which had the effect of alienating a large number of Protestant voters.[13]

[11] Ibid, p. 97.
[12] Ibid, p.97.
[13] John P. Rossi, 'The Transformation of the British Liberal Party: A Study of the Tactics of the Liberal Opposition, 1874-1880', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 68 (1978), 1-133.

III Turnout at by-elections

Turnout at by-elections tended to be lower than at general elections although the comparisons need to be carefully made because turnout also varied significantly from one general election to another. Table V/3 shows the turnout at the three general elections in the period, analysed by region. It can be seen that in the whole of Great Britain in 1874 it fell below the level achieved in 1868 and rose again to its highest point of the three elections in 1880. As we have seen in Chapter I, the decline in 1874 may have been due to the unexpected nature of Gladstone's dissolution, the relatively shorter campaigning period for that election and the relatively disorganised state of the Liberal party. The other notable feature of the analysis is that over all three elections turnout was consistently higher in northern constituencies as compared to those in the south.

Table V-3 Turnout at general elections

Location & type of constituency	1868	1874	1880
Southern English Boroughs	70.0%	67.7%	77.8%
Northern English Boroughs	76.8%	74.0%	78.7%
Southern English Counties	72.5%	71.0%	74.9%
Northern English Counties	77.1%	80.5%	80.2%
England	74.0%	72.2%	77.8%
Wales	80.9%	73.2%	82.6%
Scotland	77.8%	72.4%	82.2%
Great Britain	74.6%	72.3%	78.4%
Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and own calculations.			

In the same way that by-election results can be used to give a general indication of changes over time in the support for the parties, so they can be used to give an indication of changes in the voters' electoral enthusiasm. Table V/4 below shows the increase or decrease compared to the previous general election of the average turnout at by-elections in each of the years between the general elections.

Table V-4 Turnout at by-elections

Year	Average turnout	Increase (decrease) in turnout from previous general election
1868 general election	74.6%	
1869		(0.47)%
1870		(3.22)%
1871		(3.77)%
1872		(3.24)%
1873		(5.55)%
1874 general election	72.3%	
1874		3.83
1875		(1.94)%
1876		(0.24)%
1877		0.84%
1878		2.59%
1879/80*		10.41%
1880 general election	78.4%	
Sources and Notes: Based on election statistics computed in accordance with Appendix I. * The figures for 1879/80 include those held in the 1879 calendar year plus the 3 by-elections (Liverpool, Barnstaple and Southwark) held in February before the general election.		

After the 1868 general election turnout was stable in 1869 but thereafter was considerably below the 1868 level in every year before 1874. Immediately after the general election turnout rose adding weight to the view that the fall at the general election had been due to the matters specific to the general election mentioned above. In the following three years turnout remained fairly flat until 1878 when it began to rise again followed by a substantial increase in 1879/80 until the general election which saw the highest turnout of the period. The significant increase in 1879/80 was due to the four by-elections held between December 1879 and February 1880. It is noticeable that this seeming increase in electoral enthusiasm took place after Gladstone's Midlothian campaign of 24 November 1879 to 8 December 1879.

IV Importance of by-elections to contemporaries

We have seen that by-elections could be useful predictors of future election results. Every indication is that politicians thought so too. Gladstone was certainly interested in what they could tell about party popularity. In January 1874, after the disastrous

year of by-election results for the Liberals and clearly contemplating dissolution, he wrote to his Chief Whip, A W Peel:

> Some time ago, when in search of topics of consolation, I obtained them from you in the shape of figures. I again repair to the same source. It is *alleged* that, as a rule, the Liberal party fares ill, even in good political times, at single elections as compared with general Elections. Have you records which will enable you to show the number of seats won & lost by the Liberal party in 1831, & again the number won and lost during the existence of the Parliament then chosen? Together with like figures for each following Parliament, down to the present & including it to this date. This would fairly test the allegation – I am afraid our last remaining allegation. There may be *something* in it.[14]

There is no record of how or whether Peel dealt with the request but it is clear that in asking for an analysis of by-elections preceding every general election since 1832 and in obviously expressing a knowledge of the 'swing back' phenomenon, that Gladstone was deeply interested in the predictive power of by-elections.[15]

Gladstone again emphasised his belief in the importance of by-elections when he looked back at his first government and wrote:

> For the first time the mind of the nation, as tested by the constituency, had decisively altered during the course of a single Parliament; and the bye-elections, as we now see in retrospect, had previously supplied sufficient means of prognosticating the alteration. It is evident that, under such circumstances, bye-elections had, so to speak, received promotion in rank: they had acquired a new significance and had gathered not only an increase of interest, but a new kind of interest.[16]

It should be remembered that in writing this article Gladstone's intention was to show that the then current Tory administration was becoming more unpopular. Further evidence of Gladstone's faith in the significance of by-elections was shown in the same article when he used the by-election results between the general election of 1874 and mid-1878 to predict the outcome of the next general election. Based upon the seats gained by the Liberals at these by-elections he predicted a Liberal majority of 75 seats over the Tories. In the event he was too pessimistic as the Liberal party gained a landslide majority of 115 seats at the 1880 general election.[17]

Disraeli was also deeply interested in the results of by-elections. Harold Gorst described this in his biography of his father, J. E. Gorst, where he noted:

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[14] Matthew, *The Gladstone Diaries*, p. 441.
[15] On 'swing back' see R. McKenzie and A. Silver, *Angels in Marble. Working-Class Conservatism in Urban England*, (London, 1968) and Chris Cook and John Ramsden, *By-elections in British politics*, (London, 2003).
[16] W. E. Gladstone, 'Electoral Facts', *Nineteenth Century*, 4 (1878), 955-968, p. 955.
[17] Ibid, p. 967.

> The satisfactory results achieved by this new system of organisation were manifested at the bye-elections which occurred from time to time. Disraeli took a great interest in the working of the new machinery. When a bye-election was won he was satisfied that everything had been in order, and the successful result furnished him with sufficient proof that such was the case. But he gave instructions that whenever a bye-election was lost, he was to be fully informed of the cause of the defeat; and this was invariably done.[18]

Contemporary commentators thought by-elections significant. References by the newspapers to the implications of by-election results for the general political situation and future election results are legion. A few examples give a flavour of that coverage. In 1871 the *Examiner* was acutely aware of the importance of the Plymouth by-election when it remarked that the defeat of the Liberal candidate was 'a serious blow to the party in power'.[19] Similarly, in 1871 the *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, in reporting the Conservative success in North Nottinghamshire on 26th February, thought that the result was a reaction against the more extreme elements of the Liberal party and 'a general election just now would rather astonish the Leaguers and Liberationists'. [20] In May 1873, the *Belfast News-Letter* gave another good example when, after the Conservatives had gained a seat at the Gloucester by-election, it analysed the failures and deficiencies of the Gladstonian Liberal government, opining that these had made:

> An impression that years will not efface; an impression which told upon the election at Bath on Monday, and which told on the election of Gloucester yesterday; and which we are confident will turn the political tide finally when the electors of the Three Kingdoms come to give their votes at the coming general election.[21]

In 1878 the *Bristol Mercury* reported that the question of an early dissolution had been discussed in cabinet but no decision had been made as the government awaited the results of the Rochester and Southampton by-elections being held that week. In the event other factors constrained Disraeli's hand as the two by-elections countered previous recent results by showing a swing to the government.[22]

By-elections in this period were also important as a means of providing important members of the government with a seat in the House of Commons, either because they had been unseated, or because they had not previously been a Member of Parliament. One of the first by-elections held after the 1868 general election occurred

[18] Gorst, *The Earl of Beaconsfield*, p. 130.
[19] The Plymouth Election, *Examiner*, 25 November 1871.
[20] *Belfast News-Letter*, 9 May 1873.
[21] *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 14 June 1878.

for precisely these reasons. The Marquess of Hartington was a key member of Gladstone's Liberal cabinet but he had been defeated at the general election in Northern Lancashire. Hartington had held a seat in this constituency unopposed since 1857, but when the Conservatives decided in 1868 to contest a number of Lancashire seats he was defeated. He went down in good company since Gladstone himself was defeated in South Western Lancashire as the Conservatives triumphed in Lancashire as a whole.[23] It became necessary, therefore, to find Hartington a seat and an existing member prepared to make an appropriate sacrifice was found in the shape of Richard Green-Price, the member for Radnor Boroughs. Radnor was a small Welsh constituency with 841 electors in 1868, whose electors had never been called to the polls since the Great Reform Act, the seat having been held over the whole of the previous period by the current incumbent's uncle and two other local landowners. Green-Price resigned his seat and, despite the Conservatives deciding to contest the seat for the first time, Hartington won easily, as he was to do at the 1874 general election. Green- Price appears to have been suitably rewarded, being created a baronet in 1874 and appointed as High Sheriff of Radnorshire in 1876. He returned to parliament in 1880 as member for Radnorshire.[24]

V Issues in by-election campaigns

Nothing illustrates the national significance of by-elections in this period and their importance to the conduct and rhetoric of electoral politics more than the issues which were debated in these single one-off contests. Chapter III contains the results of a survey of the issues on which candidates focussed in their election addresses at the three general elections in the period. It was shown that the issues which occupied the candidates and the newspapers were almost wholly of a national nature; that is to say they were matters of policy which tended to effect the whole of Britain, although some could be of concern only to a single kingdom because of its particular circumstances - an example of this being the electoral pre-occupation in Scotland with the law of hypothec, which was a unique product of Scottish law.

[23] On the question of Conservatism in Lancashire see for instance: P. F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the new Liberalism*, (Cambridge, 1971); Clarke, 'The Electoral Sociology of Modern Britain'; Greenhall, 'Popular Conservatism in Salford'; Vincent, 'The Effect of the Second Reform Act in Lancashire'.
[24] *Derby Mercury*, 3 February 1869; *Standard*, 2 February 1869.

In order to ascertain whether similar conclusions could be drawn about the issues debated at by-elections a survey was undertaken covering by-elections in 59 constituencies between 1868 and 1880. This included an examination of candidates' reported speeches and local newspaper editorials. The results of this survey were very similar to those for the general elections and show that the issues debated were very largely of a national nature with only a few relating solely to the constituency concerned. The results also suggested two other features of issues debated at by-elections. Firstly, it was apparent that the by-election debates tended to focus on one or two particular topics whereas at general elections the candidates debated a wider range. Secondly, it was also apparent that the topics which received such focus at by-elections tended to be those which were the most contested topics of the day.[25] This finding illuminates another feature of by-elections during the period, namely their importance in providing forums of national political debate when Parliament was not in session. This can be particularly seen during the period from 1876 to 1879 when the Eastern Question frequently dominated by-election debates.

Another good illustration of these points is given by the Plymouth contest of 1871. The last eight months of that year were particularly good for the Conservatives and marked a downturn in the fortunes of Gladstone's administration. In April 1871 the Conservatives had gained a seat at Durham. In August they famously gained a seat in East Surrey and in September Truro fell, leading *The Times* to comment that these results indicated:

> A growing and uneasy dissatisfaction with the conduct, legislative or administrative, of the party in power, and if warnings of this sort be neglected a real and irresistible reaction will come.[26]

The Gladstone government had already shown its legislative hyperactivity and Forster's controversial Education Act had passed into law the previous year. During 1871 the perhaps even more controversial Licensing Bill was being debated in parliament and nationally. It was against this backdrop that a piece of government mismanagement had resulted in a problem finding candidates to fill the newly created judicial positions on the Privy Council, and, despite much discontent from the bar, it was decided to appoint the Attorney-General, Sir Robert Collier, a successful QC on

[25] For a description of this phenomenon in Edwardian by-elections see Paul Readman and Luke Blaxill, 'Edwardian By-Elections', in Thomas Otte and Paul Readman (eds), *By-elections in British Politics, 1832-1914*, (Woodbridge, 2013), .
[26] *The Times*, 14 September 1871.

the Western Circuit and Liberal Member of Parliament for Plymouth but with no judicial experience, to the judicial committee of the Privy Council. This meant Collier would be elevated to the peerage and, consequently, could no longer continue as member for Plymouth, necessitating a by-election to decide his successor.

Plymouth was a two member constituency with an electorate of 4,840 in 1868 (which expanded to 5,552 in 1880). Since 1832 it had generally been a Liberal seat, although sometimes the representation was divided. Notably, all its elections from 1835 to 1868 were contested. In 1868 Collier had been elected with a fellow Liberal, Walter Morrison. They defeated a single Conservative candidate, R. S. Lane, with a Liberal share of the vote of 58% gained on a turnout of 74%. Collier was appointed Attorney-General in December 1868 and a by-election was accordingly called for the 21 December 1868 and, in common with most ministerial by-elections at that time, Collier was returned unopposed. Subsequently, in August 1870 Collier was appointed recorder of Bristol thereby necessitating a further by-election in Plymouth. Although there were good precedents for the Attorney-General holding the recordership of Bristol, it was one of the most valuable in the country, and Collier received a good deal of criticism in *The Times*, the *Law Journal*, and elsewhere. At that time Plymouth Dockyard was already suffering badly from the Liberal policy of retrenchment and the consequent cuts in government expenditure. These factors, together with pressure from his own local party, led him to announce that he would resign the recordership immediately after the election.[27] In these circumstances there was no challenge to Collier and was duly re-elected without a contest. In an editorial *The Times* accurately pointed out that Plymouth, being highly dependent on its naval dockyards, was suffering from the impact of the government's policies of retrenchment and this made the possibility of a contest, and even possible defeat, more likely. As *The Times* concluded 'we suspect that had not Retrenchment been practiced in Plymouth Dockyard, not a voice would have been raised in the borough against the Attorney-General for accepting the recordership of Bristol'.[28] In this particular case, therefore, the local circumstances of the government's retrenchment programme seem to have been influential.

Thus, just over a year later, when Collier was appointed to the judicial committee of the Privy Council and he had to resign his seat, these fears over electoral

[27] Ibid, 16 August 1870.
[28] Ibid, 17 August 1870.

sentiment in the Plymouth dockyards were put to the test. The Liberals needed to find a new candidate and the Conservatives, perhaps predictably, given the machinations of Collier's legal posts and the political situation in the nation, decided to contest the seat, selecting Edward Bates as their candidate. Bates announced himself as a defender of the existing institutions of the country and accused the Liberals of subverting the Monarchy and the House of Lords. He went on to say he was in favour of Clause 25 of the Education Act and, perhaps understandably for a candidate who was both a ship-owner and standing in a naval constituency, emphasised the need for a strong navy to back up a strong foreign policy. Finally, for good measure, he was against temperance legislation, against the ballot and in favour of the Church of England. [29] The Liberals held a public meeting the same day and selected Alfred Rooker, an alderman and a leading solicitor in the town, despite some apparent misgivings amongst Liberal supporters. At this meeting Rooker professed himself in support of the ballot, and prophesised the extension of the franchise and the further redistribution of seats, as well as suggesting the duration of Parliament should be shortened and the House of Lords reformed by the introduction of life peers. He said he would support Mr Miall's disestablishment motion, but could not go the whole length of the Permissive Bill, though he agreed with it in principle. He condemned the Contagious Diseases Act and the Law of Primogeniture.[30]

These major issues bear a remarkable resemblance to the key issues debated by candidates at the general election of 1874.[31] Education was an issue mentioned by both Liberals and Conservatives at that election, together with the armed forces, the introduction of the ballot and the extension of the franchise and redistribution. The Licensing Laws continued to be debated in 1874 after the watered down version of the bill being debated in 1871, passed into law in 1872. In the event Bates captured the seat for the Conservatives with a majority of 242 votes and after a swing against the Liberal government of 12 %. Bates went on to hold the seat in 1874 and despite the Liberal tide of 1880, to hold on in 1880 with a majority of 36. Unfortunately for Bates he was petitioned for the 1880 election and was unseated for bribery, although the Conservatives won the subsequent by-election.[32]

[29] Election address of Edward Bates, *John Bull*, 11 November 1871.
[30] *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 10 November 1871.
[31] See Chapter III which deals with the issues debated at the general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880.
[32] *PP*, 1880, Controverted elections, (337).

A review of the press coverage of by-elections in this period demonstrates its extent as well as showing it was usually much more detailed than at a general election. The sheer volume of information at general elections often resulted in only brief details in respect of most individual constituencies, so that, for example, news from a smaller constituency in Dorsetshire might never be reported in a Preston newspaper at a general election whereas its by-election was reported extensively.

These points can be aptly illustrated by three by-election examples. There was a by-election in June 1870 for the Isle of Wight which resulted in a Conservative gain. The election process from the announcement of the death of the sitting member to the result and analysis of the poll was reported in major London daily newspapers and in most large regional papers across the country, from Cornwall to Dundee.[33] The poll was held on Friday 10 June and on Saturday morning most readers were able to learn the result of the election. A second example is the by-election in Mid-Cheshire which was polled on 7 March 1873. The results and description of the polling were published the following day in numerous newspapers.[34] Finally, the electors of Dorsetshire were not accustomed to being troubled to cast a vote for between 1832 and 1876 there had been only one poll. Nevertheless, when they were summoned to the polls for a by-election in February 1876 the contest received widespread coverage in the national and provincial press.[35]

Thus, by-elections provided important news topics to fuel the ever increasing demand of the growing newspaper industry for material and this itself increased the political activity at by-elections which became national events. This coverage and the spread of newspapers encouraged the nationalisation of the nature of issues debated at by-elections. In addition, concurrently, issues debated between the candidates at by-elections were dominated by national political issues, usually those forming part of the current topical debate, especially proposed legislation which was before parliament at the time of the by-election. Indeed, as a result of all these pressures, leading politicians

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[33] See, for example, *Birmingham Daily Post, Freeman's Journal and Daily Advertiser, Glasgow Herald, Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle, Isle of Wight Observer, Northern Echo, Belfast News-Letter, Bradford Observer, Bristol Mercury and Daily Post, Dundee Courier and Argus, Essex Standard and General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties, Examiner, Ipswich Journal, Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Leeds Mercury, Morning Post, Pall Mall Gazette, Preston Guardian, Sheffield and Rotherham Independent, Standard, Royal Cornwall Gazette Falmouth Packet and General Advertiser* and *The Times* in the period 1st June 1870 to 10th June 1870.

[34] See, for instance, *Bradford Observer*, 8 March 1873; *Cheshire Observer*, 8 March 1873.

[35] See, for instance, *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 5 January 1876; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 January 1876; *Morning Post*, 1 January 1876; *Daily News*, 5 February 1876.

found it increasingly appropriate to become involved in by-elections in various ways which would have been unheard of before this period. This included articles in the media, letters of support and even visits to the local campaign by leading party figures.

VI Electoral politics and the Eastern Question 1876-78

The previous sections have shown that by-elections were a vital part of electoral politics in the 1870s.They acted as barometers of public opinion and as forums for the debate of national political issues, features which are illustrated by the attention given to the by-elections which took place during the two years after June 1875, when British politics were dominated by the Bulgarian atrocities and the Eastern Question as a whole. By-elections in this period were national events, were reported nationally, and were regarded and constantly quoted, as measurements of the public mood and its satisfaction or otherwise with the foreign policy of the government.

Rumours of the Bulgarian atrocities were first reported in Britain in the *Daily News* on June 23 1876.[36] The same day W. E. Forster, the Liberal member for Bradford, prompted by this report, asked the Prime Minister for information that the government possessed on the issue and in the following days the story took off in Parliament and the national and regional newspapers of Britain. Between June 1876 and June 1878 there were 48 by-elections in Britain through which the change in public opinion since 1874 and the popularity of the government's policies towards Turkey and Russia were closely monitored. The *Manchester Times* gave its review of events of 1876 and noted that:

> Elections took place here and there in different parts of the country, and produced results the most audacious devil's advocate dared not undervalue or ridicule. The government was placed upon its trial; the issue in every case was one of confidence or no confidence in Lord Beaconsfield's administration; and for answer there came one after another a vote of no confidence at once emphatic and unmistakeable. East Cumberland, Burnley, Carmarthen, Horsham, Leeds, Leominster, and Manchester gave a decided verdict against the government, and the same set of public sympathy was illustrated a little less decidedly in the Premier's own county of Bucks and the borough of East Retford where narrow majorities barely removed the Conservative victories from defeat.[37]

Victorian newspapers could frequently be extreme in their political bias and the *Manchester Times* was a decidedly Liberal journal. However, its view of the 1876 by-elections is supported by most other evidence. The following paragraphs consider how

[36] *Daily News*, 23 June 1876.
[37] *Manchester Times*, 24 February 1877.

these by-elections, and others, reflected the changing popularities of the Administration and the opposition during this period of political turbulence.

The first by-election after the story broke in June 1876 was held at Shoreham on 5 August. Shoreham had returned two Conservatives at the 1874 general election. The death of one of these members, Sir Percy Burrell , caused the by-election and his brother, Sir Walter Wyndham Burrell retained the seat for the Conservatives. The Conservatives had taken 73% of the poll in 1874 but the Liberals performed much better this time and there was a swing of 13% against the Conservatives. At this stage the Eastern Question did not seem to have had a significant impact and Sir Walter did not mention foreign affairs in his acceptance speech.[38]

The next by-election was at Carmarthen on 14 August 1876, and this provides a similar example. A small Welsh borough with 4494 electors in 1874, the seat had been surprisingly won at the 1874 general election by a Conservative, Charles Neville, in a relatively close run contest, defeating the Liberal, Arthur Stepney, the son of the previous incumbent, Sir John Stepney, despite the fact that the latter had polled 76% of the vote at the general election of 1868. Neville resigned at the beginning of August and after several attempts to find a candidate the Conservative eventually conceded the seat without putting up a candidate resulting in the return of Stepney who had stood again for the Liberals. Stepney's election address did not mention the Eastern Question or foreign policy, focussing on education and disestablishment (which he supported). Foreign policy and the Eastern Question had not, therefore, become a major issue at this stage.

One day later on 15 August 1876 Leeds went to the polls. In 1874 Leeds had elected one Liberal and two Conservatives. In 1876, the Liberal member, R. M. Carter, resigned giving rise to the by-election. The candidates were John Barran, a former Mayor of Leeds, for the Liberals and W. L. Jackson for the Conservatives. Barran won with 54.8% of the vote, a small 0.5% swing against the government. Again, at this stage, foreign affairs did not feature significantly in the candidates' addresses. Barran asserted that non-intervention was the best policy for the 'honour and welfare' of the country. Jackson did not mention foreign affairs and neither candidate referred to Bulgaria and the Eastern Question. The main issues addressed by the candidates were common for this period and included the continuing debate on the universality of

[38] *Ipswich Journal*, 8 August 1876.

education and religious instruction in schools, the extension of the county franchise and the redistribution of seats, the disestablishment of the Church of England, the relations between employers and employees and the Permissive Bill. [39] The content of candidates' speeches and the question at public meetings covered much the same range of topics.[40]

By September, however, the Eastern Question began to gain traction as a significant issue as was shown by the by-election in the Prime Minister's constituency of Buckinghamshire on 22 September 1876, caused by Disraeli's elevation to the peerage as Earl of Beaconsfield. The Conservatives had generally taken two of the three seats in the constituency at general elections and at the 1868 election the representation had again been shared between two Conservatives and one Liberal. In 1874 a poll had been necessitated because a rogue Conservative, W. Talley, stood; but he polled only 151 votes and the 'official' candidates were comfortably returned, with the Conservatives taking 63% of the vote.

At the by-election the Hon. T. F. Freemantle stood as Disraeli's replacement and the Hon. Rupert Carington for the Liberals. The *Essex Standard* did not have a high opinion of Freemantle noting that:

> The attempt to force an inexperienced Whigling into the seat he [Disraeli] filled, is naturally regarded in Buckinghamshire as an insult to their late honoured member, and is likely to end in mortifying defeat to the Liberals who unwisely engage in it.[41]

Freemantle's appointment, however, showed ulterior Disraelian motives because he selected him 'in accordance with Lord Derby's predilections'.[42] Disraeli's need for Derby's support for his foreign policy and his stance on the Eastern Question had influenced the candidate's appointment. Carington, for the Liberals, addressed a meeting of electors at Chesham on 31 October expressing his strong dissatisfaction with the conduct of the government in reference to the atrocities in Bulgaria. Freemantle, addressing electors in Uxbridge, spoke on the Eastern Question as well noting that, in his opinion, the atrocities would just as well have occurred if Gladstone had been premier.[43] At this stage, however, other issues were also discussed and Carington, in a speech at Aylesbury, spoke on local taxation, Lord Sandon's Education

[39] *Leeds Mercury*, 12 August 1876.
[40] Ibid, 12 August 1876.
[41] *Essex Standard and General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties*, 1 September 1876.
[42] Marvin Swartz, *The Politics of British Foreign Policy in the Era of Disraeli and Gladstone*, (New York, 1985), p. 31.
[43] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 September 1876.

Act, the Burials Bill as well as the Turkish atrocities. Regarding the atrocities, Freemantle gave an indication of how politicians viewed by-elections as an important means of expressing the state of public opinion on major issues, when he said:

> It rested with the electors of Bucks to express what was in the mind of every Englishman. The result of that election would not displace the present government, but it would be felt beyond Buckinghamshire, and beyond England itself.[44]

In the event, Freemantle retained the seat for the Conservatives, but only with a majority of 186 and after a massive swing of 12% to the Liberals.[45] Derby was not as disturbed by this result as might be expected recording in his diary that 'the majority under 200, but it was thought likely the Liberals would win: the result proves that the existing excitement has not so far done us much harm: and is so far important, that the Liberal press was prepared to treat success as a great party victory'.[46]

After Buckinghamshire the next by-elections were at Frome and Liskeard. Frome was a small borough with an electorate of some 1200 electors. The representation had regularly switched between the parties and in 1874 a Conservative, H. C. Lopes, had won with 53.5% of the vote. Lopes was made a judge and at the consequent by-election, on 24 November, H. B. Samuelson, who had formerly represented Cheltenham, captured the seat for the Liberals with 53.9% of the vote on a swing of 7.4% against the government, defeating the Conservative candidate, Sir James Ferguson. The Eastern Question seems to have played a decisive role in this election. At the general meeting of the Frome Conservative Association on 4 November shortly before news of his appointment, Lopes addressed the Bulgarian atrocities and the Eastern Question.[47] He emphasised the importance of protecting British interests in the face of Russian aggression and criticised the speeches of Gladstone and other Liberal politicians on the issue.[48] His successful Liberal opponent, Samuelson, also thought that his election 'would tell Lord Beaconsfield's government that the first borough which had an opportunity of expressing an opinion on his policy

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[44] *Daily News*, 7 September 1876.
[45] At this time Gladstone published his political pamphlet (W. E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, (London, 1876)) on 6th September 1876 and sent '250 little ones' to Carrrington whilst at the same time continuing to give Granville advice on marshalling votes in the constituency. Gladstone to Granville, 7 Sept., (Private) 14 September 1876: Ramm, Corr. , vol. 1 nos 7, 10. Quoted in Swartz, *The Politics of British Foreign Policy*, p.41.
[46] John Vincent, *A Selection from The Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby (1826-93) Between September 1869 and March 1878*, (London, 1994), entry for 22 September 1876, p. 329.
[47] *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 4 November 1876.
[48] Ibid, 4 November 1876.

was emphatically averse to it'.[49] As *The Times* noted, emphasising the importance of by-elections to the major political commentators of the time:

> The chief interest of the Frome election is that it occurs at a great crisis in the national affairs and the result may be taken as an opinion expressed on the national policy. The question of peace or war in the East must have been in the thoughts of every voter who thought on politics at all, and it must have been felt that the first decision which the new member would have to take after the meeting of Parliament might be whether he should support or oppose as armed intervention in a Russo Turkish war.[50]

The next by-election was at Liskeard on 22 December 1876 where the Liberal candidate, Leonard Courtney, won easily against a fellow Liberal.[51] The Eastern Question again dominated the campaign. This may well have been influenced by the Great National Conference on the Eastern Question held on 8 December 1876 at which Gladstone was the key-note speaker.

The trend of swings against the government continued into 1877 and public opinion was tested again at the Halifax by-election on 21 February 1877. Halifax had since 1832 generally returned two Liberals and the strength of Liberalism in the borough was emphasised when one Tory newspaper described it as:

> A town so bigotedly attached to false Liberalism, a borough so wrapped up in shoddy and dissent as to have endeavoured to turn out Mr Forster as a reward for the services he had rendered to the cause of education, could hardly aspire to becoming so soon a Conservative borough.[52]

The Liberals had comfortably retained both seats in 1874 with 58.4% of the votes. The by-election was triggered by the resignation of one of the members and at the by-election the Liberal, John Hutchinson, easily defeated the Conservative, R W Gamble, with 61.3% of the vote, a swing against the government of 2.9%.

The Wilton by-election was also held on 21 February 1877 and provided a salutary reminder that influence could still be important in a few small boroughs. Wilton was a family borough under the influence of the Earl of Pembroke when the Reform Bill of 1832 was passed. Near to Old Sarum, the boroughs were joined together in 1832 and converted into some resemblance to a slightly more modern

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[49] *The Times*, 25 November 1876.
[50] Ibid, 25 November 1876.
[51] There appears to have been some confusion in the literature as to the party labelling of the candidates at the Liskeard by-election. Colonel Sterling, the other candidate, is shown by Craig (Craig, *Election Results*) to be a Conservative whereas in *McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book*) he is shown as a Liberal. Contemporary newspapers describe him as being before the electors in the Liberal interest, although, they thought, he may have attracted the Conservative vote. (*Reynold's Newspaper*, 10 December 1876). For the purposes of this thesis he has been treated as a Liberal.
[52] *Blackburn Standard*, 24 February 1877.

borough; but the place kept its old character. The *Manchester Times* described the constituency as:

> A pocket borough it was, so it remained, and so it is now, when Mr Sidney Herbert, the brother of its proprietor, has only to assert his hereditary claim to the seat in order to obtain it. It is Liberal or Tory, it is an appendage of the Herberts, and its decision does not affect, one way or the other, the question as to whether the country is or is not tired of Lord Beaconsfield and his cabinet.[53]

Hanham recognised it as a nomination borough and noted that 'while the 13th Earl was a minor Lady Herbert returned Sir Edward Antrobus a Liberal Conservative who sat from 1855 – 1877. [54] Her son, Sidney, was, however, a decided Conservative and when Antrobus decided to retire many Liberals thought he had been sacked by the Herberts to make way for him.[55] However, the Liberal nature of Antrobus's representation mattered little against Sidney's influence.[56] Although the Liberals put up a candidate, Herbert won easily and 80% of the formerly Liberal borough voted Conservative. Perhaps unsurprisingly in this last refuge of aristocratic influence, the Eastern Question did not figure strongly in the campaign.

The next by-election was at Oldham on 1 March 1877. This contest generated enormous press coverage and sustained national interest. Oldham, in common with a number of Lancashire industrial boroughs, had returned two Conservative members at the 1874 general election, so the by-election, prompted by the death of one of those members, promised to be a test of the government's popularity.[57]
Lieutenant Colonel T. E. Lees was the Conservative candidate and in his address he emphasised his local connections, support for the national church, Conservative legislation on dwellings for the labouring classes and working hours. He also emphasised how:

> The foreign policy of the present government meets with his hearty concurrence and particularly the skilful management of the Eastern Question, which under the very critical circumstances has preserved the peace of Europe, without, on the one hand abetting Turkish misgovernment, or, on the other hand, encouraging Russian aggression.[58]

[53] *Manchester Times*, 24 February 1877.
[54] Hanham, *Elections*, pp. 411 – 412.
[55] *Daily News*, 17 February 1877.
[56] *Blackburn Standard*, 24 February 1877.
[57] John Tomlinson Hibbert was formerly vice president of the Local Government Board in Gladstone's first administration.
[58] *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 19 February 1877.

The Liberal candidate was J. T. Hibbert and his address was brief, stating he had nothing to add to his former professions of Liberal principles but focussing on how he was 'in favour of a more firm and decided policy on behalf of the suffering Christians in European Turkey'.[59] This proved to be sufficient as Hibbert was victorious with 2.5% swing against the government.

Launceston was a small Cornish constituency, with 826 electors in 1877, unused to contested elections, having had no polls between 1835 and 1874. The Werrington Park estate dominated the borough and, in 1876, was owned by Colonel J. H. Deakin. Deakin had been elected in 1874 only to be unseated on the infamous 'bribery' charge of allowing his tenants to shoot rabbits.[60] The Colonel's eldest son won the re-run election, but retired three years later at the insistence of the whips. This was another good example of by-elections providing a means of getting government figures elected because its intention was to bring Sir Hardinge Gifford, the Solicitor General, into the House (Gifford had experienced great difficulty finding a seat having spent three Parliamentary terms as Solicitor General without a place in the commons) and Deakin was leant on to provide this opportunity.[61] Hardinge's address emphasised that with regard to foreign policy, 'an English statesman's first duty is to consider what is best for his own country, and that includes the existence of peace and good government among all nations'.[62] In a speech he said, with regard to the Eastern Question, that the government had had 'the most tremendous responsibility and opposition'.[63] The Solicitor General won, but there was a swing of 9% against the Conservatives.[64]

The by-election at Salford in April 1877 has been much misunderstood by historians and the influence of the Eastern Question on its outcome was emphasised by contemporaries for their own political purposes. It has been suggested that 'of all the contests during the "Great Eastern Crisis" the one at Salford has been accorded the greatest significance' and that it shaped the contours of British politics for the next year or so'.[65] In fact, as will be seen, it was heavily influenced by specific local issues

[59] *Daily Gazette*, 20 February 1877.
[60] Hanham, *Elections*, p. 47.
[61] Ibid, p. 48; *Reynold's Newspaper*, 18 February 1877.
[62] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 24 February 1877.
[63] *Western Mail*, 28 February 1877.
[64] Ibid, 24 February 1877.
[65] T. G. Otte, "The Swing of the Pendulum at Home': By-elections and Foreign Policy, 1865-1914', in Thomas Otte and Paul Readman (eds), *By-elections in British Politics, 1832-1914*, (Woodbridge, 2013), 121-150, pp. 129-131.

and the impact of the Eastern Question on its outcome is highly questionable. Salford had regularly returned Liberal members from 1832 to the Second Reform Act. That Act dramatically increased the electorate from 5,397 in 1865 to 15,862 in 1868 and the constituency led the Conservative reaction in Lancashire, returning two Conservatives in both 1868 and 1874.[66] Lancashire, in this period, was a very poor guide to electoral sentiments in the country as a whole because of its particular Conservative tendencies.[67] The death of one of the members caused the by-election which was held on 19 April and which resulted in the return of a Conservative, Colonel O. O. Walker. It was a close run contest with Walker taking 50.79% of the vote - a swing against the government of only 0.03% as compared to 1874. The Liberals had expected to win and the Conservatives were jubilant claiming the result was a turn in the electoral tide and a vindication of the government's foreign policy. In fact, matters were rather more complicated. Firstly, the Liberal candidate, Joseph Kay, had been unwell and had spent the entire campaign in London. He was unable to visit Salford at any time and could not undertake any canvassing or make any speeches and appearances. Shortly before the election rumours circulated that he was dead and the Liberals had to distribute posters attesting to their candidate's health.[68] The Liberals were certainly concerned that their candidate's absence might be interpreted as seeming indifference and lose them votes as a result. Equally, they had to reassure the electorate that Kay would be able to carry out his duties if elected. The second major factor was that the Irish vote was very important in Salford, estimated at 1,500 electors. As a result the governance of Ireland was an issue and there had been talk of replacing Walker with a Conservative candidate more sympathetic to Home Rule because of it.[69] Kay supported the establishment of a committee of enquiry into Home Rule and the local members of the Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain appointed a committee to organise and direct the Irish voters. One of their leaders, Hugh O'Donnell, claimed that they delivered the Irish vote to Kay.[70] Whilst this may have been the case the problem in Lancashire was the reaction of the significant anti-Irish vote; as the *Daily News* commented 'Mr Kay's ill-judged coquetting with the Home Rulers may have lost him

[66] *Royal Cornwall Gazette Falmouth Packet and General Advertiser*, 13 April 1877.
[67] Otte takes the opposite view suggesting it was 'the principal electoral weather gauge of the period'. Otte, 'The Swing of the Pendulum at Home', p. 16. See also Greenhall, 'Popular Conservatism in Salford'.
[68] *Leeds Mercury*, 20 April 1877.
[69] *Royal Cornwall Gazette Falmouth Packet and General Advertiser*, 13 April 1877.
[70] *Daily News*, 9 April 1877; *The Times*, 23 April 1877; *Saturday Review*, 21 April 1877.

some votes'.[71] Thus, there were other factors, apart from the Eastern Question, which significantly influenced the result in what was already a constituency with strong working class Conservative support. The difficulty of reading the Salford result as being a clear verdict on the government's policy over the Eastern Question is also suggested by the return to large swings to the Liberals at by-elections immediately afterwards.

The by-election at Huntingdonshire in June 1877 had some claim to fame in having been caused by the demise of the sitting member due to sunstroke while riding his horse in Hyde Park. The Conservative candidate was Lord Mandeville, eldest son of the Duke of Manchester, and a man who had great influence in the constituency, which was home to Kirmbolton Castle.[72] The Eastern Question does not appear to have been a major issue and Mandeville's address did not mention it focussing rather on local taxation and farming. It was sufficient for the Conservatives retained the seat but there was a 6% swing against them. The Liberal tide continued at Grimsby in August 1877 when they gained the seat from the Conservatives with a 10% swing in their favour. Despite the interference of another Liberal candidate Alfred Watkin was successful.

As diplomatic negotiations on the Eastern Question continued into 1878, by-election results became more mixed. The year had opened with an 8% swing against the government in January at Perth. However, in February the government held a Scottish seat and the local contacts of the Conservative candidate helped reduce the swing against them to 3.4%. By March proposals for the Congress of Berlin were under discussion and the government's position appeared to stabilise when they held Hereford, maintaining their share of the vote. By the end of the month public sentiment appeared to be flowing with the administration as they gained Worcester with a swing in their favour of 9.8%. This was the height of war discussions with the call up of reserves and the resignation of Derby although the Conservatives were undoubtedly helped by the failure of the local Liberal party to agree on a candidate - eventually, Sir Francis Lycett agreed to stand but only 7 days before polling.[73]

At Tamworth on 25 April 1878 the Liberal press became very excited about a great victory and indeed the Liberals did gain a seat previously held by the

[71] *Daily News*, 23 April 1877.
[72] *York Herald*, 14 June 1877.
[73] *London Standard*, 23 March 1878.

Conservatives. [74] It has been suggested by T. G. Otte that the swing to the Liberals was an enormous 43% on a larger turnout.[75] This fails to take account of the voting patterns in Tamworth and the actual swing to the Liberals was only 3.7%, making the result in line with the swing against the government at this time but not one of any great significance.[76] A bigger swing was recorded by the Liberals at Reading on 18 May 1878 when they retained their seat with a favourable swing of 6.5%. By June, however, the tide began to swing back towards the Conservatives. The Liberals held their seat at Rochester but there was a 2.3% swing to the Conservatives. Similarly, the Conservatives held Southampton on 17 June 1878 with a swing in their favour of 4.8%. As *The Times* cautioned, however, Southampton was one constituency where specific issues relating to the docks and shipping industry were important and probably more important than the Eastern Question.[77]

These by-elections over the 24 months to June 1878 show how important such contests were to the national political controversy over the Eastern Question and this importance was aptly illustrated by a debate which took place a few months later in September and October 1878. It involved senior politicians of both parties, leading national and provincial newspapers, and concerned the status of by-elections as the opinion polls of their day, as the best indicators of the state of public opinion on particular issues and, by extension, the legitimacy of government policy. The debate thus showed the vital importance of by-elections in electoral politics and the power that they held for commentators and politicians, and the electorate.

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[74] For example *Birmingham Daily Post*, 25 April 1878.
[75] Otte, 'The Swing of the Pendulum at Home', p. 17.
[76] At Tamworth the comparison of the by-election results to the 1874 general election needs to be made with great care because of the political affiliation of Sir Robert Peel the other incumbent member. Sir Robert, the former Prime Minister, represented Tamworth as a Conservative until his death in 1850. His son, the next Sir Robert, initially stood as a Conservative until he switched to the Liberals in the 1850s although in 1874 he stood as a Liberal Conservative (Craig classifies him as a Liberal in 1874, McCalmont as a Liberal Conservative).
Otte's suggestion that there was a swing of 43% to the Liberals at the 1878 by-election on a larger turnout than 1874 is simply incorrect (ibid, p. 17). In common with most by-elections the proportion of voters casting a vote was lower at 85.5% at the 1878 by-election than at the 1874 general election when 87.3% of voters cast one or two votes. A swing of 43% can only be calculated by assuming Peel should be classified as a Conservative. Yet, rather than speculate on the correct labelling of Peel's politics a more profitable line of inquiry is to consider the 1874 voting analysis for Tamworth in 1874 is one of the few constituencies in this period for which a poll analysis is available (Craig, *Election Results*, p. 666.). This shows that in 1874, 1616 electors voted and 608 of these voted for Hanbury, the undisputed Conservative candidate. At the by-election in 1878, 1793 electors voted and remarkably 607 of them voted for Bridgeman, the Conservative candidate. This approach yields a more accurate figure for the swing, i.e. 3.7%.
[77] *The Times*, 15 June 1871.

The debates started on 23 September 1878 when Gladstone sent a letter to a Rowland Rees JP in response to information conveyed to Gladstone through Mr Rees by his son, a member of the legislature in one of the Australian colonies, referring to a meeting recently held in support of Gladstone's Eastern policy. Gladstone had suggested that the state of opinion in Australia on the Eastern Question must be highly dependent for information on what can be learnt from the London newspapers, but according to the great majority of these papers, the policy of the government has the general and warm support of the people of Britain. Gladstone further stated that:

> The Australian public is neither aware of the testimony of the national Press at large nor is it probably cognisant of the fact that while Europe, as well as the colonies, have been fed with these assurances, the constituencies of this country, when an opportunity has chanced to occur and the question has been tried, have returned in large majority those who disapprove the conduct of the ministry.[78]

It is, of course, typical of Gladstone's skill for political tactics and self-publicity that this letter to an Australian state legislator should happen to be published in *The Times*.

The following day this attack on the popularity of the government's policy provoked a reply from Lord Claud Hamilton, which was similarly published in *The Times*.[79] In this letter Hamilton challenged Gladstone to demonstrate his assertion that there had been a large majority who disapproved of the policy of the administration, in the context of the by-elections which had taken place since the autumn of 1876.[80] Hamilton's letter summarised the results of the by-elections since then, suggesting that these results could not sustain Gladstone's view that by-elections had 'returned in large majority those who disapprove the conduct of the ministry'. A response from Gladstone was published contemporaneously in which he appeared to some to be ducking the issue, saying:

> I fully admit your title to make the challenge contained in your letter of the 27th, but I also ask the liberty of choice as to my method of dealing with it; and I do not see any

[78] Ibid, 26 September 1878.
[79] Ibid, 4 October 1878.
[80] Hamilton made four assertions. 1. Contested elections had taken place in the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen, Salford, Hereford, Northamptonshire, Perthshire, Belfast, Cirencester, Northumberland, Worcester, Southampton and Truro which resulted in the defeat of 'those who disapprove of the Ministry'. 2. The constituencies of South Shropshire, Oxfordshire, East Somerset, Staffordshire, Mid Somerset, Canterbury, West Kent, and Boston had, without any contest, returned members who approve of the conduct of the Ministry. 3. The great university which rejected Gladstone had recently returned by an enormous majority a member of the Ministry. 4. The constituencies of Middlesex, North Lancashire, Westminster, York, and the University of Dublin had returned two members of the cabinet and three of the Ministry without opposition.

> reason why I should reply to questions involving only a part of the case, rather than deal, as I mean to do if I can find the time, with the whole of it.[81]

This prompted a rather acerbic reply from Hamilton in which he stated that the points he made were questions of fact rather than opinion: 'Is it not evident that the authenticated records of Parliamentary elections during the past two years prove your 'fact' to exist merely in your own imagination'.[82] Those who thought Gladstone might make an ill-considered comment or retreat from a challenge were, subsequently, to be proved wrong yet again.

In the same edition of *The Times*, an editorial devoted much space to a somewhat tongue in cheek discussion of Gladstone's attempts to withdraw from public life, using Hamilton's letter as an example of the kind of attention which he could not avoid. However, the same editorial admitted the validity and significance of by-election results. *The Times* thought that Gladstone would have difficulty in sustaining his argument, stating:

> We scarcely see how Mr Gladstone will be able to make good his words. He will be able to show that there has been some gain for the Opposition, but there have been losses too, which have gone very near to counterbalance it.[83]

The Times reckoned that 'twenty five seats had been lost, while, on the other hand, only twenty seats have been gained' and 'we look in vain to the voice of the country for a clear , definite sentence of any kind, such, for example, as that which it pronounced towards the close of Mr Gladstone's own Ministry'.[84]

There was no immediate response from Gladstone at this stage but on the 7th October at Kinross, W. P. Adam, who had been Gladstone's Chief Whip in the previous administration, gave a speech which addressed the issue. He said that:

> Many speakers and writers were persisting in saying that the elections were still in favour of the government, but, in order to show the fallacy of this, he had prepared a number of electoral statistics, which were of a thoroughly conclusive character.[85]

His argument was that since January 1876 there had been 83 by-elections of which 57 were contested and 26 were uncontested, and, of the contested elections, 32 had also been contested at the 1874 general election. These latter elections, he said, 'offered the

[81] *The Times*, 4 October 1878.
[82] Ibid, 4 October 1878.
[83] Ibid, 4 October 1878.
[84] Ibid, 4 October 1878.
[85] Ibid, 8 October 1878; *Leeds Mercury*, 8 October 1878.

best ground of comparison as to the government in 1874 and since January 1876' and in these 32 elections, exclusive of those in Ireland, the Liberal party had gained ten seats, while they had lost only one'. In addition, the total votes, in these elections, for the Liberal party was 103,249 in 1874 compared to 101,999 for the Tories. The comparative figures for 1876 were 118,139 for the Liberals and 104,697 for the Tories. This gave Liberal majority in 1874 of 1250 and in 1878 of 12442, and if the Leith election were to be added the Liberal majority would be increased to 14583. He finally noted that 'during the present year 19 elections had resulted in a majority of 7416 against the Eastern policy of the government'.[86]

The *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* was a consistently Conservative journal and must have been in a sarcastic mood when it referred to 'Mr Gladstone's heroic announcement to his Australian admirers'.[87] Accordingly, it was not going to allow Adam to cover Gladstone's tracks quite so easily. The newspaper had two objections. Firstly, Adam's comparison had used by-elections from the commencement of 1876 rather than mid-1876 when the issue of the government's policy on the Eastern Question had come to the fore. Secondly, they noted that a number of Liberal successes in the 19 elections over the past year were not necessarily due to the 'labours of the Liberal caucus'. The paper thought the omission of the Irish elections was significant and suggested that at the Tamworth by-election Bass's beer carried the day while at Newcastle under Lyme the Liberal Home Rulers gained the victory.[88]

The debate was next taken up by the Central Offices of the party organisations. On 14 October W. B. Skene wrote to *The Times* on behalf of the Conservatives with an attack on Adam's remarks which he thought 'were calculated to create a false impression'.[89] Skene thought Adam was wrong because he left entirely out of consideration those elections which were uncontested. Instead, he suggested, consideration should be given to all of the elections during 1878 and of all of the elections since 1874. Thus, he maintained, during 1878 33 seats had fallen vacant containing 233,341 electors, out of which 20, with a total of 175,216 electors had

[86] *The Times*, 8 October 1878. See also *Spectator*, 12 October 1878, which gives the Liberal votes for 1878 as 116,139.
[87] The *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* was consistently pro-Conservative throughout the nineteenth century. (British Library http://newspapers11.bl.uk/blcs/AberdeenJournal.htm, accessed on 17 January 2012.
[88] Ibid, 9 October 1878.
[89] Skene had been appointed principal agent of the Conservative party in 1876 (Gorst, *The Earl of Beaconsfield* p.101.). He resigned after the defeat at the 1880 General Election. *The Times*, 15 October 1878.

returned Conservatives, and 13, with a total of 58,215 electors had returned Liberals. Of these seats 12 were uncontested, ten Conservative and two Liberal. He pointed out that 5 of the ten uncontested Conservative seats had been warmly contested by the Liberals in 1874 but they had chosen to leave them uncontested at the subsequent by-elections. Two of these were Ministerial elections and Adam had stated that it was not good etiquette to contest seats vacated by Ministers on appointment except under special circumstances. Skene then showed the combativeness of the Conservative party organisation in contesting seats when he said that even in these circumstances surely Adam 'would not deny the changed feeling of the country which he alleges to have taken place is a special circumstance which would warrant such a contest'.[90] Skene then showed that the remaining 21 contested seats were equally divided between the parties (10 Conservative and 11 Liberal) and so far as concerned the number of electors in these constituencies, the Conservatives had a majority of 'upwards of 14,000'. He then used a bit more statistical wizardry in relation to the results since the 1874 general election. In this period the Liberals had gained 12 seats from 81 Conservative seats, a success rate of 14.5%, whereas the Conservatives had won 10 out of 55 Liberal seats, a superior success rate of 18%. Finally, he noted that this net loss of two seats compared favourably to the net loss of 47 seats endured by the Liberals in the five years of the last parliament.[91] Skene's response received coverage in a number of national and provincial newspapers.

The *Standard* took the view that it was fairer to take the results over the whole Parliament because of the impact of the Eastern Question on the Liberal cause, or, as they put it the 'unfair advantage taken of the "heart of the country" during the autumn of 1876 by the traders in Turkish atrocities'.[92] The newspaper also reminded its readers that 'as in the fifth year of every government its influence and popularity begin to decline, so Mr Adam, the Liberal whip, will not be persuaded that the process with which he has been so familiar has already begun with his opponents'.[93] The *Isle of Wight Observer* also supported Skene's response, although it did make a remark which must have chimed with a number of the followers of this debate that 'almost anything can be proved with figures, and it scarcely required so much ingenuity and experience

[90] *The Times*, 15 October 1878.
[91] Ibid, 15 October 1878.
[92] *Standard*, 16 October 1878.
[93] Ibid, 16 October 1878.

as we are told Mr Adam possesses to make out a plausible case for the assertion that the Liberal party has been growing in favour with the constituencies of late years'.[94]

The next major step came with a riposte from Liberal Central Office. In a letter to *The Times* Alexander Craig Sellar, who worked for Adam in the Liberal central office, argued that it was correct to consider the period from 1 January 1876 'because it was only from 1876 that the Eastern policy of the government became of paramount importance in elections'.[95] Sellar then reiterated the argument that in this period those constituencies which were also contested at the 1874 General Election afforded the purest and best available test of the feeling of the country. The result of this test was, he said, was to show a large increase in the voting power for the Liberals amounting to 12,872, with a gain of ten seats and a loss of one. He rejected the concept of taking into account the uncontested elections since 14 of these occurred in English counties, where, he said, at any time, a contest would be hopeless for the Liberals.[96]

This letter provoked a further reaction from Skene in which he produced tabulations of the votes of the elections concerned, aiming to show that the figures of Adams and Sellar were wrong. The key to the difference between the calculations was in the results for Manchester and Oldham which were constituencies where 'the Liberals have had a larger number of candidates than there were seats to be filled, the votes polled by the redundant candidates having been included'. In addition, he said 'in cases where two candidates stood on each side, each party has been credited, as is obviously fair, with the number of votes polled by their highest candidate'.[97] As will be shown in Appendix I, this method of measuring electoral support in multi-member constituencies is not necessarily fair. There was also a mistake in his figures which was pointed out by Harcourt.[98]

Then on 30 October there was a substantial rejoinder from Gladstone when he published his paper on by-elections entitled 'Electoral Facts' in the *Nineteenth Century* magazine.[99] This is one of the most important contemporary publications in this period on by-elections since it demonstrates on the one hand, the importance of the analysis of these contests to contemporary politicians and, on the other, its analysis spans a large part of the period from the Liberal victory of 1868 to 1878, the year of its publication.

[94] *Isle of Wight Observer*, 19 October 1878.
[95] *The Times*, 19 October 1878.
[96] Ibid, 19 October 1878.
[97] Ibid, 25 October 1878; *Morning Post*, 25 October 1878.
[98] *The Times*, 29 October 1878.
[99] Gladstone, 'Electoral Facts', p. 955.

It is also important because the paper develops the concept of electoral swing for the first time. Although he does not use the expression itself there can be little doubt this is what he had in mind when he said that:

> Numerical advance in seats gained is not, however, the only test; the diminution….of the majorities by which seats are lost is one equally true and equally significant.[100]

In this article Gladstone also gave his much-awaited response to the debate over public opinion and the Eastern Question. He takes it as agreed with Skene that there had been 49 contested by-elections since the 1st January 1876 of which the Liberals had won 28 and the government 21, which was 'a majority of seven elections upon forty-nine, or a majority exactly of four to three, is, as will be seen if it be extended to larger numbers by multiplication, a large majority' and this provides the justification for his original assertion, that had started the whole debate, that electors had 'since the Eastern Question came forward, returned Liberals in large majority'.[101] Rather more impressively, he then goes on to examine those contests that were also contested in 1874 so as to measure the swing to the Liberals in this period, a calculation which he performs by measuring the change in the aggregate votes cast for the parties, and which shows a swing to the Liberals of 2.28%.[102]

As might have been expected, Gladstone's paper received widespread coverage in the newspapers; the coverage reflecting both his insistence on the importance of by-elections, his continued assertions that the balance of public opinion was to be measured by their results and that they clearly showed a majority against the government's foreign policies. After Gladstone's broadside Skene made another attempted attack, repeating his arguments against Adam's (and thereby Gladstone's) figures, but the argument had moved on and the debate petered out at this point.[103] Whilst at times this debate had become somewhat arcane and must have tried the patience of some of its followers it is nevertheless important because it shows the importance to which by-election results had risen in political assessments and debate. It also demonstrates the growing use of aggregate electoral statistics together with Gladstone's own interest and belief in their utility.

[100] Ibid, p. 955.
[101] Ibid, p. 964.
[102] Gladstone did not go as far as calculating the percentages, but this is a simple next step and his method is clearly an endorsement of the use of weighted averages for these calculations.
[103] *Morning Post*, 11 November 1878.

VII Conclusions

By-elections were of central importance to electoral politics between the Second and Third Reform Acts. They provide important insights into the development of electoral politics in a period in which the public political sphere become much more 'pluralistic, representative and responsive'.[104] They were regarded by contemporaries, including politicians, commentators and the public, as important indicators of public opinion and as good predictors of the likely outcome of general elections. In the latter assumption they were generally justified. Sometimes individual by-election results needed careful interpretation because of the impact of important political issues of the day or because of the influence of particular local factors, but on the whole the results of by-elections immediately preceding general elections tended to be good predictors of the overall result of the general elections. This was particularly true of the period before the general election of 1874. The contests immediately before the 1880 general election, however, need care in their interpretation. Politicians used their results to make decisions – certainly they were considered by both Gladstone and Disraeli when making decisions on the timing of a dissolution. However, whilst there is no doubt both Prime Ministers used by-election results, ultimately Gladstone ignored their indications, called a general election and lost whilst Beaconsfield tried to interpret them, called a general election and also lost. They were also used to score political points and to mount attacks on the policies of opponents – by-elections were used this way in the run-up to the 1874 general election and during the heat of the debates over the Eastern Question.

By-elections also functioned as laboratories for the development of new techniques such as those that were needed after the Ballot Act. Most importantly they played an important role in politics generally as forums of debate for key issues of the day. They tended to focus on the key issues of politics which were currently being debated and provided an important forum to do so when Parliament was not in session. Changes in modes of communications in this period both enabled and courage this role. Firstly, the communications revolution of the period ensured that news and debate from a single by-election was spread immediately across the country. Secondly, a single by-election with no other competing electoral news could achieve a degree of

[104] Vernon, *Politics*, p. 146; although this phrase is taken from Vernon's work, his own point is to contend that such a development was an illusion.

publicity which was simply not possible at a general election when the sheer volume of results swamped the reporting of individual debates. This meant by-elections were both an agent of as well as a beneficiary of the nationalisation of politics in this period.

Chapter VI Resolving political change

I Changes in the electoral environment

The 1870s saw some of the most dramatic changes in British electoral politics in the nineteenth century. These changes set the course for the future development of electoral politics. The three general elections from 1868 to 1880 were conducted under a unique franchise which trebled the size of the electorate and which for the first time gave the vote to large numbers of working men. Each successive election produced a change in government and a precedent was set for British parliamentary politics when, for the first time, the incumbent prime minister resigned before parliament met. After the 1880 general election *The Times* succinctly made this point when it said:

> The moral of the past general election, as of its predecessor, is that the British people holds itself constantly free to commission the leaders, now of one party, now of another, to do its work. Those leaders must do the work for the people and in obedience to its spirit, not in accordance with their own pleasure.[1]

The electoral structure was significantly altered with the introduction of the secret ballot, the end of public nominations and the gradual development of the requirements of the franchise. These were accompanied by transformational changes in communications through the enormous growth in number and circulation of newspapers and the use of the electric telegraph. All these factors contributed to the development of national electoral politics and a lessening of the importance of the politics of place. They also resulted in huge changes in the development of party organisation - driven not only by the increase in the electorate but also through the changes in the framework of the electoral system, principally caused by the Ballot Act.

II Changes in structure, language and organisation

The Ballot Act undoubtedly reduced the frequency of violent incidents at election times. Its impact on corruption was perhaps less than intended by the Act's supporters but it is probable that the nature of corruption changed. Before the Act bribing

[1] *The Times*, 3 May 1880, p. 11.

individual electors had been a significant feature of electoral corruption. Proponents of the secret ballot thought this would be eliminated because, they argued, it would make no sense to bribe an individual when there was no way of knowing whether he had kept his side of the bargain by voting for a particular candidate. There does seem to have been a reduction in individual bribery but this was accompanied by an increase in other forms of corruption such as treating. As was suggested at the time, this meant that electoral malpractice became more wholesale and less retail. The impact of secret voting on intimidation is less clear. There is little evidence that secrecy significantly altered behaviour. However, this lack of evidence may equally be due to an over-estimation of the impact of influence before the introduction of the Act rather than its failure to eliminate its impact. Certainly the legislation stopped the intimidation and threats inherent in the system of public voting and also disposed of the meaningless ritual of public nomination of candidates on the hustings. Lawrence suggested that this entailed the loss of a valuable means of political expression for non-voters.[2] The crowds at the hustings had been composed of both electors and those not qualified to vote as well as including a significant proportion of women. He argued that the speeches given on the hustings by the candidates and the robust heckling provided an inclusive political atmosphere in which all could participate. When the returning officer called for a vote, for example, many of the disenfranchised would participate in the show of hands. The significance of the participation can, however, be overrated. By the time of the 1868 general election, the only general election held using public nomination and voting on the enlarged franchise, many who had previously attended the hustings in the boroughs were now enfranchised. Whilst an open show of hands was often called for when there was a contest between candidates it was always followed by the declaration of the need for a poll and the show of hands never decided an election. Similarly, it has not been possible to find an instance of a candidate standing down or being rejected at the hustings.

We have seen in Chapters III and IV how, during this period, the language of electoral politics and party organisation began to develop significantly. We also saw in the Introduction how these changes were enabled and enhanced by the development of the press. If the change in the electoral environment brought about by legislative changes acted to improve popular participation in electoral politics then the

[2] Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, pp. 41 – 51.

development of communications did the same. The 1870s were a golden age for British newspapers and their development privileged the development of print media as the principal mode of electoral communication.[3] It liberated electors by providing much easier access to political debates and arguments, both by immediacy of access and by the sheer variety of views and opinions. Importantly, it also gave non-electors similar access to the electoral debate because the wider availability of newspapers and the significant reductions in their prices. It also gave non-electors similar access to the electoral debate. Vernon took a contrary view holding that English politics became 'progressively less democratic during this period as political subjectivities were defined in increasingly restrictive and exclusive fashions'.[4] He thought that the development of the print media was an important factor in this process which was part of a closure of the public political sphere.[5] This dissertation argues these views are wrong. Vernon claims that the growth of the press has been exaggerated and he was also 'doubtful whether it created new or wider audiences' because of the widespread collective use of papers since the eighteenth century.[6] Chapter II argued that his arguments cannot be sustained in the face of the aggregate national statistics and the dramatic improvement in literacy rates in this period. This dissertation has taken the view that the most important change was the huge increase in the volume of available information and the transformation in its speed of transmission. These two factors enlarged the public sphere and enabled the debate and development of politics as did the multiplicity of political sympathies represented by the growth in the number of newspapers. This expansion of the public sphere and the importance of the press is show in Chapter III where the examination of candidates' addresses demonstrates the growing importance of the nationalisation of political language which in this period was already significantly loosening the importance of the politics of place. The party leaders' addresses connected this development to the parties' ideas and language.

The importance of this symbolism and language together with their connections to party organisation was discussed in the Introduction and Chapter IV, where we noted the emphasis placed by recent writing on electoral history on the role of parties in constructing their allegiances and support through the use of language and

[3] Vernon, *Politics*, see, for example, p. 336. [Footnote on this is why this dissertation uses newspapers so much].
[4] Ibid, p. 9.
[5] Ibid, for instance p. 36. Vernon also thought, like Lawrence, that the secret ballot and the abolition of the hustings had the same effect. Ibid, p. 337.
[6] Ibid, pp. 145 – 146.

ideas. The importance of party organisation in communicating with and responding to electors was crucial. Chapter III's analysis of candidates' addresses showed the linguistic differences in the parties' strategies and appeals and particularly focussed on the development of Conservative language, which remains neglected by historians. This theme was also developed in Chapter IV which looked at the use of language and imagery in the development of Conservative working men's associations. These two chapters show how the parties, particularly in this case the Conservatives, could be more flexible and adaptable than has sometimes been suggested. We have seen how the development of the newspaper industry dramatically changed electoral communications and this had its impact on the development of language and ideas. By way of example, Disraeli's speech at the Crystal Palace in 1872 was subsequently reported in newspapers across the nation. Similarly, Gladstone's Midlothian speeches of 1878 were reported across the country. These speeches were not just for the benefit of his Scottish electors, they were for the country as a whole and the newspapers ensured the whole country received them.

These two major developments in the electoral environment and the changes in electoral language and communications had their impact on party organisation. The increase in the size of the electorate and the increase in the size of the working-class vote presented particular challenges. Historians have, however, focussed less on the impact of the Ballot Act on party organisation. Arguably, the changes brought by the secret ballot, which were described and analysed in Chapter II, had at least as much impact as the increase in the number of electors. Parties responded to these organisational demands on two different levels. Chapter IV described the developments of the 1870s in central party organisation with the appointment of central party agents, the formation of central offices and the creation of national organisations of constituency bodies. The chapter also focussed on the development of local party activity, particularly in the run-up to the 1867 Reform Act. This suggested that the parties were aware of the challenges that Reform might bring and were much more active in the constituencies than may have been previously thought. Local associations of both parties developed in this period. Chapter IV records how local Liberal Registration Associations were more common than had perhaps been previously thought. In the case of the Conservatives the development of Conservative working men's associations showed an acute recognition at local levels of the

challenges that would come from bringing a conservative message to the newly-enfranchised electorate.

III General elections and electoral statistics

A recurring theme of this study has been that there is much evidence that general elections were remarkably general and were becoming increasingly so as the period progressed. Chapter III showed how the issues discussed by candidates in their election addresses were remarkably consistent across the countries and regions of Great Britain and that there were many similarities between the issues that were considered important in England, Wales and Scotland. Perhaps even more strikingly, there were very few issues mentioned that could be regarded as purely local and specific to the constituency concerned. Chapter III also demonstrated how candidates most often followed the examples of their party leaders in the issues which they included in their addresses. In addition, we have seen how the language used by candidates of each party was also remarkably consistent across the country as was the imagery frequently used by party associations.

Chapter V analysed by-elections during the period and these provide a good deal of evidence for the nationalisation of general elections. They were regarded by contemporary politicians, commentators and the public as good predictors of the likely outcome of general elections. This belief would have made no sense without the conviction that the results of an election in a single constituency were swayed by debates of a national character and that the electors of that constituency were in some way representative of the nation as a whole. This conviction was shared by Gladstone and Disraeli, both of whom paid attention to the predictive power of by-elections when deciding upon their timing in calling general elections. The generality of elections was also displayed by the topics debated most fiercely at by-elections. These were nearly always issues of a national nature and often reflected the debates that were taking place in Parliament at that time. Indeed, by-elections performed an important role as a forum for national debates when Parliament was not in session.

Chapter I examined certain electoral statistics for the three general elections and used variations in turnout and electoral swing to analyse and discuss the results of the three general elections. An overriding feature of these statistics is their exceptional consistency across Great Britain. There were, of course, variations in the details, but broadly speaking, nationwide trends tended to be followed in the vast majority of constituencies. Thus, in 1874 the swing to the Conservatives varied from region to

region and from constituency to constituency, but that degree of variation was limited. Constituencies which exhibited a swing to the Liberals were exceptional. The conspicuous consistency of behaviour amongst voters across the regions and nations of Great Britain suggests that the individual politics of particular localities may not have been as important as nationwide factors. It also indicates the analytical power of these statistics since it is difficult to conceive of this aggregate picture arising from the total effect of a large number of random factors at play in individual constituencies. There is certainly no evidence that contemporaries thought this.

Salisbury wrote in1884 in his article on the redistribution of seats that 'the obtrusion of statistics upon the readers of the *National Review* requires some apology', but nevertheless went on to use them at length to support his argument.[7] This thesis has also taken the view that electoral statistics, used in an appropriate manner with relevant caveats, can also provide illuminating insights into the development and understanding of electoral politics. The results of elections are facts which historians ignore at their peril. This is not necessarily a fashionable view but the Introduction and Appendix I to this thesis show that two particular approaches deployed to undermine the use of electoral statistics, particularly for this period, are not necessarily valid. The first argument is usually based on the supposed invalidity of using of election results together with other information in order to draw certain sociological conclusions. This argument is usually found in discussions of electoral sociology and the example given of such improper use of statistics is almost always the work of Kenneth Wald.[8] This thesis has not disputed this particular critique but simply observes that any refutation of such sociological quantitative analyses does nothing to invalidate the use of illuminating electoral statistics such as turnout and swing. The second argument has generally focussed on the difficulty of calculating electoral statistics for this period because of the prevalence of multi-member constituencies and the failure of the parties to always contest the maximum number of seats in a constituency. More importantly, this thesis has described and used a new and more complete methodology for the computation of such statistics from the election results of these constituencies. Appendix I describes the approach adopted which has allowed a more accurate calculation of these figures and which has suggested that a number of key national statistics contained in the only available resources for this period are inaccurate - and

[7] Salisbury, 'Redistribution', p. 1.
[8] The work most usually cited is Wald, *Crosses on the Ballot*.

indeed misleading. By way of example, it is suggested in Hanham that turnout at the 1874 general election was 79%, an increase of 3% over 1868, whereas turnout in fact fell to 72%.[9] In Rallings and Thrasher's work on British Electoral Facts turnout in England at the 1880 general election is recorded as 71% when it was closer to 78%.[10]

The analysis of multi-member constituencies and the trends in voting patterns in these constituencies over the period has also allowed some further insights into party strategies in this type of constituency. In particular, it has provided, as described in the Appendix, an explanation of why fielding a single candidate in a two-member constituency can be the optimum strategy in certain conditions. This tends to undermine Hanham's contention that the fielding of single candidates in such constituencies was simply the result of poor organisation and implied that such constituencies were not properly contested.[11]

IV The legacy of the 1870s

The Introduction to this dissertation noted how Harold Hanham's Elections and Party Management has remained for many years a key work on the electoral politics of the period. The wish to respond to this work in the context of later developments in historical writing on the electoral politics of the period provided a core motivation for this dissertation. Conducting research on the electoral politics of this period has emphasised the depth of Hanham's research and scholarship and has shown how *Elections and Party Management* remains a valuable source. This dissertation has also taken issue with Hanham's view on the nationalisation of electoral politics. He wrote:

> General elections were not general. Only about half the seats were contested by both parties, and even when both parties were in the field with the same number of candidates, local or regional or 'national issues' tended to be as important as those which agitated the whole of the three kingdoms.[12]

It was the intention of this dissertation to show that all of the components of this statement require substantial, if not complete modification. The preceding chapters have sought to show that the transition to national politics was well under way by the early 1870s. General elections had indeed become general. The expansion of the electorate, the development of communications, the progress of party organisation and

[9] Hanham, *Elections*, p. 193.
[10] Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher, *British Electoral Facts*, p. 99.
[11] Hanham, *Elections*, p. O/S.
[12] Ibid, p. 191.

the evolution of political language all provided a basis for future developments in electoral politics.

Appendix I Multi-member constituencies and psephological statistics for elections in Great Britain between the Second and Third Reform Acts

I The issues arising in dealing with multi-member constituencies

Multi-member constituencies have a long record in the history of Parliament and after the Second Reform Act the majority of English constituencies (163 constituencies or 63%) still returned two members, 7 returned three or more and London returned four.[13] This was the case for the elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880 until the Third Reform Act reduced the number of multi-member constituencies to 24. Such constituencies were less common in Scotland and Wales. There were only three Scottish boroughs returning more than one member and none in the Scottish counties.[14] One Welsh Borough, Merthyr, returned two members, as did three Welsh counties and three university constituencies.[15] Multi-member constituencies pose particular challenges and interests for students of political science and for historians of electoral politics in this period. These fall broadly into three categories.

Firstly, the calculation of electoral statistics in these constituencies is more problematic than similar calculations in single member constituencies. In computing important psephological statistics such as turnout or a party's share of the vote it is usual to use the total number of votes cast as a measure of the number of people voting. In a single-member constituency where an elector has a single vote, percentage turnout is easily calculated by simply dividing the number of votes cast by the number of registered electors. In a multi-member constituency, however, in order to derive the number of electors actually voting from the number of votes cast, it is necessary to make an assumption about the number of votes cast by each voter. For example, Rallings and Thrasher make the assumption that each voter casts two votes, the

[13] Bristol, for example, returned two members from 1295 to 1885. After the introduction of the so-called minority clause in the Second Reform Act each elector in a multi-member constituency had two votes (three in London) this meant that in three or four member constituencies the elector had fewer votes than the number of members to be elected which was the deliberate intent of the minority clause. See also Matthew Roberts, 'Resisting "Arithmocracy": Parliament, Community, and the Third Reform Act', *Journal of British Studies*, 50 (2011), 381-409, and Salmon, "'Plumping Contests"'.

[14] They were Glasgow (3), Dundee (2) and Edinburgh City.

[15] The Welsh counties were Denbighshire (2), Carmarthenshire (2), Glamorganshire (2), Monmouthshire (2). The universities were Cambridge (2), University (2) and Dublin (2).

maximum number of votes an elector could cast in the majority of multi-member constituencies. In presenting their statistics for turnout they note the use of this methodology and recognise that it 'makes no allowance for electors using fewer than the votes allowed to them'.[16] They suggest that this method produces 'a slight understatement of the number of electors voting as distinct from the numbers of votes cast', but they provide no evidence to support the view that this understatement is 'slight'.[17] In other words, this problem would not be so great if electors did mostly cast all of the votes available to them as they have assumed. The problem is they did not. In double-member constituencies one party would often put up a single candidate whilst their opponents fielded two. In these circumstances the supporters of the party of the single candidate usually cast only one vote, or 'plumped', for their single candidate. The other combinations of votes which electors used and the strategy of fielding single candidates are dealt with in more detail below but for present purposes it suffices to say that frequently half the electors in a constituency would cast one vote, and the other half would cast two. Most contemporary and later writers have recognised that measuring turnout in this situation using the total votes cast as a percentage of the electorate is completely meaningless.[18] Similarly, measuring a party's share of the vote when it has twice the number of votes of the opposition simply because it has fielded twice the number of candidates is equally meaningless. Most proposed solutions to this issue have agreed that all meaningful electoral statistics need to be based upon the number of voters casting ballots rather than the number of votes they each cast individually. Thus, for example, when one party fields a single candidate and the other two, a means needs to be found to determine how many *electors* voted for each party. This also has the benefit of making these elections more comparable to those after 1884 when most constituencies became single-member seats. Section III of this Appendix is about the means that have been sought to solve this problem.

The second significant feature of multi-member constituencies is the historical insight they provide on aspects of voter behaviour. For the 1868 general election a number of poll books are available which provide, inter alia, information on how individuals voted in multi-member seats. For the general elections of 1874 and 1880, after the 1872 Ballot Act, poll books were no longer used, but overall analyses of the

[16] Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher, *British Electoral Facts*, p. xvi.
[17] Ibid, pp. xvi-xvii.
[18] See, for example, Frisby, 'Voters not Votes' and Dunbabin, 'Parliamentary Elections in Great Britain'.

vote were sometimes made available by the returning officer and often published in the newspapers. In any case, this information shows the proportions of voters who cast their ballots in various ways open to them. Thus, for example, in a two member constituency contested by two Conservative candidates and two Liberal candidates, it shows how many voted for both candidates of each party, how many used only one of their votes and plumped for a single candidate and how many split their two vote between candidates of different parties. This data can provide valuable information on changes in national electoral behaviour over time and valuable insights into the electoral politics of the individual constituency concerned. For example, the trends in plumping and split-voting have been used in the formation of theories on the development of a party orientated electorate.[19] The information for a particular constituency at an individual election may provide insights into the local political situation; a high rate of plumping or split voting perhaps indicating the electorate's differing view of candidates of the same party.[20]

Finally, a failure to recognise the complexities of party and voter electoral strategies in the tactics of voting and the number of candidates each party should field in a multi-member constituencies can lead to significant misunderstandings. Hanham, for instance, took the view that when a minority party fielded only a single candidate in such a constituency the seat was, as a result, 'virtually uncontested', and, he suggested, often indicated a lack of organisational strength. As will be shown, this was in fact often the optimum electoral strategy for a minority party, and, far from resulting in a lack of contest, was much more likely to lead to a highly competitive election, the

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[19] The application of political science techniques to elections in British multi-member constituencies from 1832 to 1880 has been most thoroughly conducted by Gary Cox, particularly in Cox, *The Efficient Secret*; Gary W. Cox, 'Strategic Electoral Choice in Multi-Member Districts: Approval Voting in Practice?', *American Journal of Political Science,* 28 (1984), 722-738; Gary W. Cox, 'On the Use of Party Labels in Victorian England', *British Politics Group Newsletter,* (1985), 5-6 ; F.W.S. Craig and Gary W. Cox, 'Appendix 1: Analysis of Voting in Multi-Member Seats, 1874-1880', in F.W.S. Craig (eds), *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1832-1885*, (Dartmouth, 1988), ; Gary W. Cox, 'The Development of Collective Responsibility in the U.K', *Parliamentary History,* 13 (1993), 32-47 ; Gary W. Cox, 'A Comment on The Great Reform Act of 1832 and the Political Modernization of England: Letter to the Editor', *American Historical Review,* 100 (1995), 1371-1373.

[20] Hanham used Blackburn in 1880 as an example of the impact of local influence because of the disparity of the total votes given to the two successful Liberal candidates while noting in passing that only 3% of the voters had 'given a straight party vote'. His argument would have been more convincing if, in his analysis of the poll, he had noted that nearly all of the split votes had gone to J. K. Cross, the sitting Liberal member, and T. L. Rushton, the unsuccessful Conservative candidate who had a strong local presence as a former mayor and alderman and was 'universally known in the constituency' and was 'widely respected'. (*Blackburn Standard*, *Darwen Observer*, and *North-East Lancashire Advertiser*, 3 April 1880; Hanham, *Elections*, p. 199.

expression of minority views and the gain of a seat by the minority party which might otherwise have been lost had two candidates been put forward.[21]

Despite, or perhaps because of, these issues the questions arising from an electoral system dominated by multi-member seats have received little or no attention from historians. In fact, the most detailed attention has been given by Cox, who has spent his career as a political scientist.[22] Hanham also recognised some of the issues involved with electoral statistics by using techniques developed by contemporary commentators.[23] As shown below, however, these are themselves less than totally adequate and can give misleading indications. Importantly, we have also seen how these difficulties make comparisons between elections held under Second and Third Reform Acts respectively problematic and this may have lead historians to shy away from recognising the continuity of the development of electoral politics in mid and late Victorian Britain.[24]

This Appendix uses an individual election in a two member constituency in 1874 to illustrate a number of the issues involved and uses this as a basis to examine various attempts that have been made to deal with these statistical issues. From this a new stratified voter methodology is proposed which provides a better means of calculation. This has been applied to all the relevant constituencies in England, Wales and Scotland and forms the basis for most of the statistics in this thesis. The remaining sections of the chapter deal with a number of issues connected with the calculation of electoral swing and a discussion of the strategic issues arising for parties and candidates in multi-member constituencies.

II The 1874 general election in Pontefract

The electors in the vast majority of multi-member constituencies had two votes, elected two members, could vote in any combination except voting twice for the same candidate and, importantly, could choose to cast a single vote only. Accordingly, in a typical two member constituency with two candidates from each party a voter had a possible 10 different voting options. He could cast a single vote, plumping for one of

[21] Hanham, *Elections*, p. 197. In a footnote Hanham says 'the strategy of this was often disputed, as a candidate ran the risk of losing because his supporters gave their second vote to his opponents. On the other hand, there was always a chance in the counties and in the boroughs where the majority party was divided, that a single candidate might attract 'protest votes'', p. 197.
[22] See for instance, Cox, *The Efficient Secret*.
[23] Hanham, *Elections*; Dunbabin, 'Parliamentary Elections in Great Britain'.
[24] See the Introduction to this thesis.

the candidates (4 possibilities) or he could use both his votes selecting one of the 6 possible combinations, two of which meant a straight party vote and four of which involved 'splitting' his votes between candidates from rival parties.

The psephological issues arising from these potential voting options may be illustrated by the case of an individual constituency. Pontefract was a small two member borough with 2,038 electors registered for the general election of 1874. At the 1868 general election the Liberals had fielded two candidates and the Conservatives one. The resulting poll split the representation between the parties, electing H.C. E. Childers for the Liberals and Major Samuel Waterhouse for the Conservatives.[25] At the general election of 1874 Childers and Waterhouse stood again with Viscount Pollington also standing as a second Conservative. Childers and Waterhouse were again returned as members, and, at this election the detailed analysis of the vote count was recorded and published enabling us to analyse the vote combinations used by the Pontefract electors. Pontefract's vote count for 1874 is shown in Table A-1.

Table A-1: Pontefract – 1874 Vote Count

Candidates	Voting Combinations				
	Plumpers	Split C + W	Split C + P	Straight W + P	Total Votes
Childers (L)	699	182	53	0	934
Waterhouse (C)	60	182	0	619	861
Pollington (C)	37	0	53	619	709
	796	364	106	1238	2504
Stratified analysis of voters casting two votes					
Childers (L)/Waterhouse (C)	182				
Childers (L)/Pollington (C)	53				
Waterhouse (C)/Pollington (C)	619				
	854				
Total Persons Voting	1650				
Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and Cox, *Efficient Secret*, p. 96.					

As the table shows, in this example a number of voters chose to split their votes between candidates of different parties, thus, 182 voted for Childers and Waterhouse and 53 for Childers and Pollington. This gave a total of 235 voters splitting their vote. In addition, Conservative voters had the opportunity to use both their votes to vote for

[25] As described in Chapter II there was also a by-election in Pontefract in 1872.

Conservative candidates, however some chose to vote only for one of these candidates. These plumpers totalled 97 (Waterhouse 60 and Pollington 37). The table also shows that, based on this analysis, the total number of electors voting was 1650. As has been noted this is an important aggregate since it is used to calculate a number of electoral statistics such as turnout and each party's share of the vote.

For the majority of elections in the period under consideration only the total votes cast for each candidate were recorded. In the Pontefract example these were Childers 934, Waterhouse 861 and Pollington 709, a total of 2504 votes cast. As we have seen, in a single-member constituency where a voter has a single vote the aggregate number of votes cast accurately represents the number of voters casting their vote. In a multi-member constituency matters are more complicated because the aggregate number of votes cast bears a more complex relationship to the number of voters voting. As noted above, one method of doing this is to assume that each voter uses the maximum number of votes available to them and divide the aggregate number of votes cast by this amount. Thus, in the Pontefract example, each elector had two votes and a total of 2504 votes were cast, giving the number of electors voting as 1252. With an electorate in 1874 of 2038 this would imply a turnout percentage of 61.4%. In fact, because of the availability of the poll count we know that 1650 persons voted, giving a turnout percentage of 81.0%. This aptly demonstrates the substantial inaccuracy of the method adopted by Rallings and Thrasher. In this case it is plainly due to the fact that a large number of electors plumped for a single candidate, using only one of their votes. Thus, most Liberal supporters, but not all, plumped for Childers.

A second example of the complications of calculating electoral statistics in multi-member constituencies is the calculation of the percentage share of the total vote gained by each party. This is an important statistic as it is often used to measure the electoral swing between parties from one election to the next.[26] In the case of Pontefract the Conservatives polled a total of 1570 votes out of a total of 2504 votes, giving them on this basis a 62.79% share of the poll. This is clearly misleading because, as noted, most Liberal supporters did not wish to use their second vote. In order to produce sensible statistics which are comparable to elections in single member constituencies it is necessary to compute the parties' relative shares of the vote based

[26] A detailed analysis of the different methods of calculating electoral swing is set out below.

upon the number of persons voting rather than the numbers of votes cast. Thus, in the case of Pontefract, there was a total of 1650 electors who voted, of whom 833 voted Conservative, giving the Conservatives 50.5% of the poll.[27]

It will be apparent that these measurement difficulties arise when voters decide to split their votes or to plump for a single candidate which requires an adjustment to be made to the recorded number of votes cast in order to determine the number of voters voting for each party.[28] Plumping often occurred because a voter did not wish to vote for any other candidate even if another representing their party preference was available or because there was only one candidate of their party available. This latter reason was a significant issue in the general elections under consideration for it was common for parties to field an unequal number of candidates, the party that perceived itself to be in the minority frequently fielding a single candidate in a double-member constituency.[29] Equally, split voting could arise simply because of a voter's preference for a candidate irrespective of their particular allegiance. The next section details the proposals that have been made to solve this problem. In order to do this it is necessary to introduce two statistics, developed by Cox, which provide a useful means of discussing this issue.[30] These he termed the Non-partisan Plumping Rate (NPPR) and the Split Voting Rate (SVR). The NPPR expresses, as a percentage of the number of total voting electors, the number of electors who cast only a single vote (or plumped) when another candidate of their chosen party was potentially available for their other vote. The SVR expresses, as a percentage of the number of total voting electors, the number of electors who split their votes between candidates of different parties. It will be seen that these two statistics in essence measure the deviation of the electorate from straight party voting. The derivation of these statistics may be illustrated using the example of the 1874 Pontefract election as follows.

In Table A-2 below further analyses the 1874 results in Pontefract and shows that 235 electors cast one vote for the Liberal Childers and one vote for one of the

[27] The Conservative plumpers amounted to 97; 619 voted for the Conservative ticket of Waterhouse and Pollington; and 117.5 split their votes with the Liberal giving a total of 833.5 rounded down to 833.
[28] As we have noted it is for this reason the percentage shares of the aggregate vote given in Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher, *British Electoral Facts* for the general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880 need to be treated with extreme caution since they make no adjustment for this complication which makes their comparison with later elections hazardous. Nor are they comparable between themselves because the number and location of constituencies where there was an unequal number of candidates varied from election to election.
[29] Also see Salmon, "'Plumping Contests"' for a more extensive discussion of plumping.
[30] Cox, *The Efficient Secret*, pp. 91-92.

Conservative candidates. Expressed as a percentage of the total electors voting of 1650, this gives an SVR of 14.2%. Similarly, it shows that 97 electors chose to cast only a single vote for one of the Conservatives when another Conservative candidate was available. Expressed as a percentage of the total electors voting of 1650, this gives an NPPR of 5.9%.

Table A-2: The calculation of the Split Voting Rate and the Non-partisan Plumping Rate at Pontefract

Total Persons Voting	
Childers (L)/Waterhouse (C) (Split)	182
Childers (L)/Pollington (C) (Split)	53
Waterhouse (C)/Pollington (C) (Straight)	619
	854
Total Persons Voting	1650
Split Voting Rate (SVR)	
Childers (L)/Waterhouse (C)	182
Childers (L)/Pollington (C)	53
	235
Split Voting Rate (SVR)	14.2%
Non-partisan Plumping Rate (NPPR)	
Waterhouse (C)	60
Pollington (C)	37
	97
Non-partisan Plumping Rate (NPPR)	5.9%
Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and Cox, *Efficient Secret*, p. 96.	

The following section now examines the different methods which have been used to attempt to deal with these issues.

III Methods of dealing with electoral statistics in multi-member constituencies

We have already discussed a more recent attempt by Rallings and Thrasher to solve this problem and that they make no mention neither of how serious the deficiencies in their methodology might be. Their approach, which it will be recalled assumes that electors cast two votes, might be satisfactory if the parties had always fielded a number of candidates equal to the seats available and if voters had always

used their two votes, voting for the one of the other party when they had only one 'first choice' available. In fact, as we have seen, both these assumptions are invalid. Recalculations of all the results for the elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880, as discussed below, suggest that the differences arising from their methodology are likely to be significant. For instance, using the stratified voter methodology applied in this thesis (described further below) across all relevant constituencies in England the Liberal share of the vote in 1874 was 52.0% not 55.4% as suggested by Rallings and Thrasher. Contemporary commentators were also perfectly well aware of these problems and one of the first attempts to deal with the matter systematically was proposed by John Biddulph Martin in a paper read to the Statistical Society in May 1874. This dealt with the results of the 1868 and 1874 general elections, the latter having taken place only three months previously.[31] The methodology used by Martin and his results are also relevant because they were repeated by Hanham and have , because of the popularity of Hanham's work, become a frequently quoted source of statistical results for the three general elections in question.[32] Martin identified the core issue of measuring votes in multi-member constituencies noting that 'it is obvious that the number of votes is only in a very few cases an index of the number of voters'.[33] Martin's approach was to draw overall conclusions about the general election as a whole by considering only a sample of constituencies. His method of selection was to choose firstly, English boroughs 'returning one member which were contested at each election by one candidate of each party'; secondly, large English boroughs returning more than one member and contested at each election and 'contested by a number of candidates of each party not exceeding the number of seats, the highest number of votes given to a candidate of either party being taken as an index of the strength of the party'[34] ; and, finally, English, Welsh and Scottish Counties together with Irish Boroughs on a similar basis. Fortuitously, for comparative purposes the constituencies in this selection were also similarly contested at the 1880 election so that Hanham was able to update Martin's original calculations for that election. The unique features of Martin's methodology in dealing with multi-member constituencies are, therefore, that only a selection of constituencies are included and only the votes polled by the candidate of each party recording the highest number of votes are used in the analysis to give an

[31] Martin, 'The Elections of 1868 and 1874'.
[32] Hanham, *Elections*, pp. 192-197.
[33] Martin, 'The Elections of 1868 and 1874', p. 196.
[34] Ibid, p. 196.

index of the strength of the party.[35] In other words, if a party put forward two candidates in a two member seat then the votes given to the highest polling candidate of the two are used as a 'proximately accurate' index of the strength of the party and the votes of the second candidate are ignored.[36]

Hanham's 1959 work used Martin's analysis to present a series of statistical tables seeking to reflect the electoral changes shown by the general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880.[37] The information was based on Martin's rather small sample of constituencies but Hanham thought this could give 'a more or less scientific analysis, in the minority of constituencies which were contested at every election by sufficient candidates to enable us to say that the contest was a party contest as well as a local one'.[38] He recognised that the sample did not necessarily cover all types of constituencies but asserted that the value of his analyses lay in 'the tendencies they point to, not in their representative character'.[39]

There are severe frailties with this analysis. There are few grounds on which the sample can be regarded as necessarily representative as a basis for the general conclusions which are drawn from it. The sample on which all of Hanham's conclusions are based is made up of 47 constituencies in Great Britain whereas there are 119 other constituencies which were contested at both the 1868 and 1874 general elections which meet the specified criteria but which, for reasons which are unclear, Martin and Hanham decided not to include. One speculation is that Martin did not have available the size of the electorate for these constituencies, a figure which he needed to calculate turnout. He notes in his paper that the official return had not yet been published at the time of his presentation and he also estimated the electorate for a number of the constituencies which he did include.[40] However, no attempt was made by Hanham to update the data for information which was obviously later available or for the further 168 constituencies which were contested in 1874 and 1880 and which also met the specified criteria. Finally, there are other more detailed errors. For example, one of the constituencies in the sample used by Hanham was Halifax where in 1868 Edward Owen Greening stood as an independent labour candidate, receiving

[35] Ibid, p. 196.
[36] Ibid, p. 196.
[37] Hanham, *Elections*, pp. 192-197.
[38] Ibid, pp. 191-192.
[39] Ibid, p. 192.
[40] Martin, 'The Elections of 1868 and 1874', p. 196.

strong support from local labour activists and old Chartists.[41] Unfortunately, Greening was classified by Hanham and Martin as a Conservative and the votes he received were erroneously used in calculating the Conservative share of the poll.[42]

As a result, the utility of these statistics, which have found their way into much of the subsequent literature, is highly questionable. The differences in the figures can be significant. For example, Hanham presents a table showing turnout at the three general elections which shows that turnout increased from 76.43% in 1868 to 79.26% in 1874.[43] In fact, all the other measures of turnout for this period show that turnout fell significantly from 1868 to 1874. Ralling and Thrasher suggest that it fell from 68.5% in 1868 to 66.6% in 1874.[44] Using the method utilised for this thesis turnout fell from 74.6% in 1868 to 71.8% in 1874. The swing to the Conservatives in Great Britain at the 1874 General Election is suggested by Hanham as 4.69% whereas, using what is suggested below to be a more accurate method, the figure is 6.61%.[45]

The next approach to the issue was developed by Alfred Frisby in an article published in the *Contemporary Review* in 1880.[46] Frisby's identification of the problem is clear in the title of his paper 'Voters not Votes' and his explanation of the difficulties arising where the parties field disparate numbers of candidates.[47] His method was also resurrected by Dunbabin in his 1966 article 'Parliamentary Elections in Great Britain, 1868-1900: A Psephological Note', which appeared in *The English Historical Review* in 1966.[48] This article surveys movements in political opinion from 1868 to 1900 and uses Frisby's method and statistics to determine the swings between the Liberal and Conservative parties over the years 1868 to 1884, before the Third Reform Act. The method used by Frisby is described by Dunbabin as follows: 'He grosses the votes cast in any given constituency for the various candidates of the same party, and divides by the number of votes each elector possessed'. In fact, this is a

[41] Neville Kirk, *The Growth of Working-Class Reformism in Mid-Victorian England*, (London, 1985), p. 147.
[42] Martin, 'The Elections of 1868 and 1874', p. 197 Table E. This table shows that the 2,802 votes received by Greening are attributed to the Conservatives.
[43] Hanham's figures for Great Britain have been calculated using the data in Martin's paper.
[44] Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher, *British Electoral Facts*, pp. 98-99.
[45] Hanham's figures for Great Britain have been calculated using the data in Martin's paper. It is noteworthy that Hanham uses a weighted average based on the total votes cast for both parties in the constituencies in his sample to calculate his overall percentages.
[46] Frisby, 'Voters not Votes', p. 635. See also Alfred Frisby, 'Home Rule in Ireland', *Contemporary Review*, 38 (1880), 786-790; Alfred Frisby, 'Has Conservatism increased in England since the last Reform Bill', *Fortnightly Review*, XXX N.S. (1881), 718-729.
[47] Frisby, 'Voters not Votes', pp. 635 – 636.
[48] Dunbabin, 'Parliamentary Elections in Great Britain', pp. 82-99.

seriously incomplete summary of Frisby's methodology for he also adjusts for the number of candidates fielded by the parties. Thus, in a constituency where, for example, the Conservatives fielded two candidates and the Liberals only one, the Conservative vote would be divided by two and the Liberal vote by only one (being the lesser of the votes an elector possessed and the number of candidates fielded by the party). This accuracy is significant because it is the part of the method which makes the Frisby method intuitively attractive. It is also important because, as discussed above, parties frequently only fielded one candidate in constituencies where they considered themselves weaker than the opposition. It is important to note that these are the only adjustments that Frisby makes. His methodology implicitly assumes that electors of the minority party allocate all their votes to a single party, that is to say it makes no allowance for split voting and plumping.

Frisby bases his calculations of swings only on those constituencies that were contested by both political parties in all of the general elections during the period in question.[49] The use of the phrase 'during the period in question' is important in this context. In his 1880 article 'Voters not Votes', Frisby makes a comparison of the 1874 and 1880 general elections using only constituencies in Great Britain that were contested at both these elections. In his 1881 article 'Has Conservatism increased', he makes a comparison between the general elections of 1868 and 1880 using constituencies in England which were contested at both those elections. It is not clear on what basis Dunbabin has calculated the relative shares of the vote for the general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880. In his 1880 article Frisby shows a lead at the 1874 general election for the Conservatives over the Liberals of 0.01% for constituencies contested in both the 1868 and 1874 elections. Dunbabin shows a lead of 0.38%. It has not been possible to recreate Dunbabin's result under any combinations of Frisby's figures or by using data from Craig.

Frisby's methodology, therefore, takes into account only constituencies contested at all three elections between 1868 and 1880. This thesis takes the view that this is unnecessarily restrictive and is likely to lead to misrepresentation of movements in political opinion. The total votes and shares of the vote achieved by the parties at each general election have no absolute value because of the number of uncontested seats. Thus, the percentage of electors who voted for a party at a general election

[49] Ibid, p. 84.

cannot accurately tell us about the percentage of electors in the country who support that party because of the unknown number of those supporters who were unable to register their vote in uncontested constituencies. However, this will not affect the validity of the swing between two elections provided that it is measured using constituencies which were contested at both elections, since it is a measure of the change in opinion of a (very large) sample of voters. Accordingly, swing is most effectively measured by using constituencies contested at both elections in pairs of successive elections. Thus, in measuring the swing between 1868 and 1874, constituencies contested at both elections are used and in measuring the swing between 1874 and 1880 constituencies contested at both those elections are used, but it is not necessary that they are the same constituencies for all three elections. This is an important implicit assumption which goes to the heart of the utility of electoral statistics for it holds that the aggregation of data across individual constituencies is a valid and meaningful procedure.

This review of the various methodologies which have been used in calculating electoral statistics for multi-member constituencies suggests that the Frisby methodology is the most accurate in seeking to base these statistics on the number of voters rather than the votes cast. It is possible, however, to potentially enhance this analysis further by the application of three further improvements. It has been seen that the primary difficulty with the Frisby methodology is that it takes no account of split voting and plumping. The first improvement therefore is to use actual poll analyses for each constituency showing split voting and plumping, where these are available. The evidence of plumping and splitting may be gained by using poll books, where these are available, and for elections after the Ballot Act in 1872, by using records of vote counts which were sometimes recorded and published. Cox has surveyed all the available poll records for elections covering the period 1832-1910. His work shows that for the elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880 vote counts for a significant percentage of multi-member constituencies are available.[50] This has enabled Cox to calculate the SVR and NPPR for all available vote counts for each of the 1868, 1874 and 1880 general elections. These results are summarised in Table A-3 below. The first column shows the percentage of all double-member contests for which vote counts are available. The second and third columns show the SVR and NPPR respectively for

[50] Cox, *The Efficient Secret*, p. 99.

these constituencies. The remaining columns show these statistics for boroughs and counties respectively. The results for the general elections of 1859 and 1865 have been included for comparative purposes and illustrate the rapid decline in the SVR. The table also shows the relative stability of these measures over the three general elections under consideration.

Table A-3: SVR and NPPR statistics

	All constituencies			Boroughs		Counties	
Year	Number with vote counts	SVR %	NPPR %	SVR %	NPPR %	SVR %	NPPR %
1859	†	11.6	5.3	13.6	6.3	6.2	2.4
1865	†	8.5	4.8	10.3	6.5	6.3	2.7
1868	47	5.5	4.2	6.0	4.7	5.2	3.8
1874	47	4.8	4.1	5.1	5.0	4.2	2.2
1880	61	4.5	2.3	4.7	2.8	4.3	1.8
† Figures not comparable. Sources and notes: Cox, *Efficient Secret*, pp. 99-110; F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885*; own calculations.							

The available vote counts also cover a reasonable proportion of the number of voters in multi-member constituencies. Taking the total number of votes for which actual vote counts are available as a percentage of the total number of voters in all multi-member constituencies is about 50% for each of the three general elections.

Next, the application of the Frisby method in the Pontefract example points to a second potential improvement. Table A-4 shows the application of the Frisby methodology in this example and shows that the calculation of the number of persons voting under this methodology is 1719 as compared to the actual figure of 1650 which was shown in Table A-1 above.

Table A-4: The application of the Frisby methodology to the Pontefract example

	Total	Candidates	Frisby Adjusted

	Votes		Votes (FAV)/Persons Voting
Liberals (Childers)	934	1	934
Conservatives (Waterhouse + Pollington)	1570	2	785
Totals	2504		1719
Sources and notes: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885* and Cox, *Efficient Secret*, p. 96.			

It can be seen that the difference between the actual number of persons voting and the Frisby calculation of the number of persons voting is a function of the number of persons casting only a single vote for the Conservative candidates and the number of persons splitting their votes between the parties. These differences can be represented by statistics developed by Cox which were discussed previously. It may be shown that there is a formula based on the SVR and the NPPR, which when applied to the number of persons voting as calculated under the Frisby method gives the correct number of persons voting. Thus, in the above table the Frisby Adjusted Votes (FAV) are 934 and 785 for the Liberals and Conservatives respectively. The correct number of votes for each party can be obtained by applying the formula (FAV*2)/((SVR-NPPR)+2) where FAV is the simple Frisby Adjusted Vote, SVR is the Split Voting Rate and NPPR is the Non-Partisan Plumping Rate. Thus, applying this formula with an SVR of 14.2% and a NPPR of 5.9% to the Frisby calculated voters of 1719 will produce the correct figure for the number of voters of 1650.

Of course we do not know the SVR or NPPR for every multi-member constituency (if we did the Frisby method would not be needed in the first place). It is suggested here that because Cox has obtained a relatively large sample of results (as shown in the table above) and the remarkable stability of the statistics, it would not be inappropriate to use the overall figures for SVR and NPPR as a surrogate for the individual statistics for an individual constituency where the actual figures are not available. This use of a surrogate to amend the actual figures together with the use of the actual poll counts where they are available is a feature of the innovative methodology employed to compute the electoral statistics used in this thesis. In other words, where vote counts are available these have been used to calculate the relevant statistics and where vote counts are not available the average SVRs and NPPRs for

that year, as calculated by Cox, have been used as a surrogate for the actual SVRs and NPPRs in order to estimate the relevant numbers of voters for each constituency.

In summary, the electoral statistics used in this thesis have been calculated using the actual recorded votes for single-member constituencies and the adjusted recorded votes for multi-member constituencies. The actual recorded votes for multi-member constituencies are used where records of the relevant vote counts are available. Where these vote counts are not available the recorded votes are adjusted using a Frisby method which is then modified by the use of SVR and NPPR statistics.

IV The calculation of electoral swing

In this thesis electoral swing or 'swing' is measured as the percentage change in a party's share of the adjusted total vote between one election and another. The adjusted total vote is calculated on the basis described in the previous section of this Appendix, which, in essence, adjusts the votes cast in multi-member constituencies where parties field numbers of candidates which are different from the number of seats available in the constituency. This methodology, which measures the swing as the percentage change in one party's share of the total vote is sometimes referred to as Butler swing, after David Butler who used this method in a number of his psephological works.[51] This method is sometimes contrasted with Steed swing, named after Michael Steed, a British psephologist, which measures the swing between two parties based only on the total votes cast for those two parties. This method therefore excludes the votes cast for other parties.[52] Since virtually all the elections in Great Britain from 1868 to 1880 were contested only by the Liberal and Conservative parties both the Butler and Steed methods will produce, to all intents and purposes, the same results for these elections. Thus, in this thesis, swing is measured by the percentage change from one election to another in one party's share of the vote, which will, of course, be equal and opposite to the change in the other party's share.[53]

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[51] For example: David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1979*, (London, 1980), David Butler and Donald Stokes, *Political Change in Britain: Forces Shaping Electoral Choice*, (London, 1969).

[52] Almost all debates on this issue are about how to calculate swing based on the total votes cast but it should be noted that Henry Durant, 'Voting Behaviour in Britain, 1945-1964', in Richard Rose (eds), *Studies in British Politics: A Reader in Political Sociology*, (London, 1966), offers enlightening calculations of swing on the basis of the total electorate rather than total vote as shown on p.336 of Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*.

[53] There is an extensive discussion of the utility of electoral swing as an analytic tool and of various methods of its calculation (not including the method of averaging) in H. B. Berrington, 'The General Election of 1964', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series A (General)*, 128 (1965), 17-66.

The question then arises as to how to measure the overall swing over a number of elections in a group of different constituencies. This question is important because it arises in any circumstances which seek to measure a party's share of the vote at any level above that of an individual constituency – for example, a party's share of the vote in a particular set of constituencies (for example, a region) or at a general election or a set of by-elections in a particular year. In these circumstances there are a number of different ways to calculate an average for swing. The methods addressed here, and those generally used in the literature, are, for a set of individual constituency results, the weighted average (where the swing in each individual constituency is weighted by the total votes cast, or perhaps the total electorate, in that constituency), the arithmetic mean and the median.

Since this issue is under discussion in the context of elections from 1868 to 1880, two important issues should be noted. Firstly, there was an enormous disparity in size between the electorates of different constituencies. At the extremes, based on the number of registered electors for the 1880 general election, the smallest constituency in Great Britain was Sutherlandshire with an electorate of 326 and the largest was Liverpool with an electorate of 63,946. The electorates in other constituencies followed a broad range within these two points. After the 1885 Redistribution Act the uniformity of constituency size becomes an increasing feature of the British electoral system. Accordingly, for elections before 1885 consideration needs to be given to whether the results of a large constituency should be given more weight than those of a smaller one when attempting to give a picture of the overall position, whereas from 1885 onwards this is a less important issue. Secondly, in Victorian and Edwardian elections seats were often uncontested and plainly, at an individual constituency level, a swing can only be calculated for those constituencies which had a contest at the relevant elections between which it is wished to make a comparison. This issue needs to be borne in mind when comparing results over more than two elections, and as we saw previously, for the seats contested at both of the first pair of elections may not be the same as those contested at the second pair.

The three different measures of the average swing all appear to have been used in the literature although, as will be argued, below the weighted average method is the one which makes most sense in the context of elections where there is a considerable discrepancy in constituency size. In Pippa Norris's work the share of the vote of each party is calculated for each constituency and the arithmetic mean of these figures is

taken as the average for a particular year or parliamentary term.[54] Therefore, in this case, changes in the share of the vote or swings are calculated on an un-weighted basis. Butler and Kavanagh, in their volumes on British General Elections, analyse changes in the share of the vote by a broad range of classes including different categories of geographical location and types of constituencies. In calculating the shares of the votes of the parties in each category the aggregate votes given for each party in each constituency are aggregated for the category and the relative shares calculated using these totals. [55] Therefore, the changes in the shares of the vote or swings are calculated on a weighted average basis. It has been further suggested that, in at least one instance, Butler appears to have used the median of the swings in each individual constituency. [56] This appears to be supported by his tables in another of his works where, when presenting statistics for the overall swing between general elections, he refers to the mean swing.[57] Finally, Dunbabin refers to the unequal size of constituencies before 1885 and notes that when calculating the overall annual swing for by-elections between 1868 and 1885, he will give a note when there is 'the possibility that the result in one large division may obscure the general picture'.[58] Although he does not describe his method of averaging the swings in individual constituencies it is difficult to understand the necessity of this remark unless he used a weighted average method.

There appears, therefore, to be no consistently agreed method on the calculation of averages of percentage shares of the vote and, therefore, swings for collections of individual constituencies, nor does the subject appear to have received a great deal of debate. One strong reason for this may be that, as already mentioned, if constituencies are all of similar size there will be little difference between the results obtained by a weighted average method and those obtained by taking the arithmetic mean of the individual constituency results. Indeed, if all constituencies had exactly the same number of voters and turnouts were exactly the same then the figures obtained using the arithmetic mean and the weighted average would be exactly the

[54] Pippa Norris, *British By-Elections: The Volatile Electorate*, (Oxford, 1990), Appendix pp. 226-243.
[55] Kavanagh, *General Election of 1979*, Appendix I: The Statistics pp. 353-389. It is noted at page 335 that 'The swing is calculated on the basis of all votes cast in each region or sub-region'.
[56] 'Presumably, then, Butler has calculated swing by averaging the 630 separate swings for each of the constituencies. Evidence that this is his method is his presentation of the 1959 figure as "median swing". This was the first explicit indication he had given that in averaging he was using the median rather than the mean.' Jorgen Rasmussen, 'The Disutility Of The Swing Concept In British Psephology', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 28 (1964), 442-452, p. 444.
[57] Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, p. 172.
[58] Dunbabin, 'Parliamentary Elections in Great Britain', p. 84.

same. However, in circumstances where there is a significant disparity between constituency sizes and/or turnout the weighted average method is most likely to give useful results for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it simply seems intuitively wrong to give the same historical weight to an election result in Harwich, with an electorate in 1868 of 622, as that of Hackney, with an electorate in 1868 of 40,613. Secondly, the purpose of calculating swings for a whole general election, for a region or for some other sub-division of constituencies is surely to seek to help to give indications of the nature of political change in that region as a whole which means that results must be aggregated and weighted averages used. So far as concerns by-elections, contemporary commentators and politicians wished to know what indications election results gave for future political change in all constituencies and whilst extrapolation from a small number of results is always hazardous, it is surely better to place more weight, for these purposes, on the results from more populous constituencies.

V Party strategy in multi-member constituencies

There were a number of reasons why a party might put up a single candidate, rather than two, in a double-member constituency. There are good strategic and theoretical reasons which make such an approach the optimal strategy in particular circumstances, as well as some good practical reasons which may also have influenced the situation in some constituencies. These practical reasons included the availability of candidates, expense and lack of information, and are factors which could give rise to a decision by a party not to contest a seat at all, and which are dealt with in more detail in the Section of Chapter I of this thesis which deals with uncontested seats. Typically, these factors worked in conjunction with one another. Thus, in an age when a candidate had to fund most of his own election expenses (which in the elections under consideration could be considerable) the lack of candidates could be due to the lack of anyone willing to risk considerable sums in a hopeless cause. Of course, whether the cause was hopeless or not depended on estimates of local opinion and indications from the results of previous elections and this information could be sketchy or very old because, for example, a constituency had not been contested for some time. In such circumstances a party might have put up a single candidate in order to test opinion at

least cost. Such a motivation seems, for example, to have been behind the Liberal decision to contest Lincolnshire North in 1880 since the constituency and its predecessors had not been contested since well before the Second Reform Act.[59] In any event, the purpose of obtaining such information was to be able to make the optimal strategic decision in the circumstances.

The incentive to cross vote did not exist when there were two candidates from both parties, and it was often argued that running a single candidate was bad strategy, since the 'second votes of one's own partisans might be the cause of defeat'.[60] Hanham similarly suggested that, in relation to running single candidates in two member constituencies:

> The strategy of this was often disputed, as a candidate ran the risk of losing because his supporters gave their second vote to his opponents. On the other hand, there was always a chance in the counties and in the boroughs where the majority party was divided, that a single candidate might attract 'protest votes.[61]

Hanham did not give any contemporary references for these views and the purpose of this section is to examine the issue from first principles as well as in the light of available electoral evidence. Given the number of two-against-one contests in two member constituencies period understanding the logic of party strategy in deciding on the number of candidates to field is important to understanding the nature of electoral politics in this period.[62]

The potential benefits of running a single candidate strategy in a two member seat can be seen with the use of a simple example. For this illustration an imaginary constituency is assumed which has 2100 electors who support the Conservative party and 1900 electors who support the Liberals. In the simplest case in which the supporters of each party vote for both of their candidates the Conservatives would obviously always win. In reality we know that electors sometimes only used one of their votes, voting for a single candidate, and sometimes they split their votes between candidates of different parties. Thus, to make the example more realistic it is assumed that 240 of the Conservative supporters will split their votes equally between a Conservative candidate and a Liberal candidate, which implies a split voting rate of

[59] Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics*, pp. 182-188.
[60] Cox, *The Efficient Secret*, p. 102.
[61] Hanham, *Elections*, p. 197.
[62] Cox identified 594 such contests in the period from 1832 to 1910; Cox, *The Efficient Secret*, p.102. Hanham identified the number of such contests for the general elections of 1868, 1874 and 1880 as 77, 81 and 94 respectively. His figures also show there was a slight tendency for the Conservatives to adopt a single candidate strategy slight more often than the Liberals; Hanham, *Elections*, p. 198.

11.4%. Similarly, it is further assumed that 80 of the Liberal supporters will split their votes equally between a Conservative candidate and a Liberal candidate, which implies a split voting rate of 4.2%. Finally, it is assumed that four Conservative supporters and four Liberal supporters will plump for a single candidate from their own party and that the remainder of the voters will vote on party lines, casting both of their votes for candidates of their own party. Table A-5 then sets out the election result on these assumptions. This shows a victory for the Conservatives returning both of their candidates each with 1980 votes compared to the Liberals' 1940 votes.

Table A-5: An illustrative election with four candidates

	Total Voters	Splitters	SVR	Plumpers	NPPR	Party Vote
Conservatives	2100	240	11.43%	80	3.81%	1780
Liberals	1900	80	4.21%	80	4.21%	1740
	4000	320	8.00%	160	4.00%	3520

	Plumpers	C1+C2	L1+L2	C1+L1	C1+L2	C2+L1	C2+L2	Votes
C1	40	1780		80	80			1980
C2	40	1780				80	80	1980
L1	40		1740	80		80		1940
L2	40		1740		80		80	1940
	160	3560	3480	160	160	160	160	7840

Double Votes	
C1+C2	1780
C1+L1	60
C1+L2	60
C2+L1	60
C2+L2	60
C1+L1	20
C1+L2	20
C2+L1	20
C2+L2	20
L1+L2	1740
Total persons voting	4000

It is now instructive to consider what the result of this election would be if the Liberals were to field only a single candidate. The same assumptions are used as in the four candidate example, thus it has been assumed that the Conservative supporters who had previously decided to split their votes continue to do so, except of course that one of their split votes now goes to the single Liberal candidate rather than being split between two Liberal candidates and that the Liberal supporters who previously

plumped for a single Liberal candidate continue to vote for the single candidate rather than abstain. Table A-6 sets out the result of this illustrative election.

Table A-6: An illustrative election with three candidates

	Total Voters	Splitters	SVR	Plumpers	NPPR	Party Vote
Conservatives	2100	240	11.43%	80	3.81%	1780
Liberals	1900	240	12.63%	80	4.21%	1580
	4000	480	12.00%	160	4.00%	3520

	Plumpers	C1+C2		C1+L1		C2+L1		Votes
C1	40	1780		240				2060
C2	40	1780				240		2060
L1	1660			240		240		2140
	1740	3560		480		480		6260

Double votes	
C1+C2	1780
C1+L1	120
C2+L1	120
C1+L1	120
C2+L1	120
Total persons voting	4000

It can be seen from Table A-6 that the Liberal candidate is now elected, gaining 2140 votes compared to 2060 votes for each of the Conservatives. It is also evident that this arises because, with all other things being equal, a single Liberal candidate receives all of the split votes of the Conservative supporters rather than these being divided between the two Liberal candidates. It can also be seen that this outweighs the impact of increasing the split voting rate amongst Liberal supporters. The single Liberal candidate receives an additional 12 votes from Conservative split voters and an extra 4 votes from the original Liberal split voters who transfer their split vote to the sole remaining Liberal. The increase in the split Liberal voters has no impact on the Liberal vote because these voters continue to cast a ballot for the Liberal candidate. They do, however, increase the Conservative vote but the Conservative element of the increase in Liberal split votes, in this case 160 votes, is split between the Conservative candidates, increasing each of their totals by 80 votes. For ease of reference Table A-7 gives an analysis of the change in votes.

Table A-7: An illustrative election with three candidates

	Party vote	Plumpers	Splits	Total votes
Liberal with two candidates	1740	4	160	1940
Plumpers	-	4	-	40
New splitters	(160)		160	0
Conservative splitters	-	-	120	120
Liberal splitters	-	-	40	40
Liberal single candidate	1580	4	520	2140
Conservative with two Liberals	1820	-	-	1980
New Liberal splitters	-	-	80	80
Conservative with one Liberal	1820	-	80	2060

Accordingly, it can be seen that split voting can have a significant impact on the election result such that, if the split voting rate remains the same, a single candidate will always do better than two candidates. Even if the split voting rate increases as a result of a single candidacy for one party, it must increase sufficiently to outweigh the gain made by a single candidate from previously split votes and to increase the opposition vote sufficiently to overcome the disadvantage the opposition have in that each candidate's vote will increase by only 50% of the change.

The likelihood of an increase in the split voting rate as a result of a single candidacy by one of the parties can be estimated from the results of contests for which we have vote counts. Cox notes that 'one reason suggested by contemporaries for split voting in two-against-one contests was that the followers of the party putting up only one candidate had an incentive to use their second votes to help the lesser evil from the other party. He did find that 'contemporaries were correct that the incentive to cast split votes in two-against-one contests was greater than in two-against-two contests'.[63] In support of this contention he notes that the mean split voting rate in the 594 of the three-candidate contests for which poll counts are available between 1832 and 1910 was 17.1%. This statistic is, however, misleading in the context of the three general elections from 1868 to 1880, for the mean split voting rate in three-candidate contests for these elections was a much lower 5.6% compared to a mean split voting rate in four-candidate contests for the same elections of 3.5%, showing that for contests in this period the difference in the split voting rate between three-candidate contests and four candidate contests in two member constituencies was not great and, therefore, the

[63] Cox, *The Efficient Secret*, p.102.

danger of losing because the supporters of the party putting up a single candidate gave their second votes to the rival party are overrated.

A number of practical examples serve to illustrate that the single candidate strategy could be effective for a minority party in elections during the period. At the 1874 general election Bury St Edmunds elected two Conservatives who had been opposed by two Liberals. The majority of the second placed Conservative, Hervey, over the top placed Liberal, Hardcastle, was 207 and the split voting rate was 5.11%. In 1880 the Liberals decided on a single candidate strategy with Hardcastle standing against the two incumbent Conservatives. This single candidature for the Liberals certainly does not seem to have arisen from any lack of organisation. Gladstone certainly thought they were well organised since he wrote to the local party secretary 'expressing the pleasure with which he hears of the hearty and united state of the Liberal party of the borough'.[64] The constituency went to the polls on the 1st April and returned Hardcastle, the single Liberal candidate, at the head of the poll, with a majority over the other elected Conservative, Greene, of 260 votes. Despite the arguments of Hanham, the split voting rate had hardly changed, only rising from 5.11% in 1874 to 5.46% in 1880. Hardcastle was undoubtedly assisted by the national swing to the Liberals at the 1880 general election but he also benefitted from the additional split votes which he longer shared with a fellow candidate and the Conservatives did not benefit from any increase in split voting arising from Liberal supporters using their second vote. Accordingly, the single party strategy was a complete success for the Liberals. At Chester in 1874 the Conservatives followed a similar strategy and Raikes, the single Conservative candidate, beat two Liberals into second and third place, with a majority over the leading Liberal of 222. The split voting rate was 4.10%. At the 1880 general election the Conservatives decided to field two candidates against two Liberals but were swept aside as the Liberal landslide gathered momentum. In this case the split voting rate did fall to 1.90%. At Lincoln in 1874 the Conservatives fielded a single candidate against two Liberals and Henry Chaplin, the Conservative candidate, topped the poll with a majority of 200 over the leading Liberal. There was a relatively high split voting rate of 13.78% (521 electors) which undoubtedly benefitted Chaplin as a single candidate receiving all 521 split votes rather than sharing them with a colleague whilst Seely, his nearest Liberal

[64] *Daily News*; ibid, 11 March 1880.

challenger failed to receive 139 of the split votes which went to Palmer, his fellow Liberal. Thus, Chaplin would have been defeated if he had needed to share the split votes with a second Conservative candidate. Lincoln was thus another success for the single party strategy.

So far we have considered the issue of multi-member constituencies from the perspective of the political parties and their decisions over the number of candidates to field at contested elections. This has shown the importance of electors who did not vote on a straight party basis, either by plumping or by cross voting. It is now necessary to consider this issue from the perspective of the individual voter. Cox decided that 'there was no necessary relationship between influence and split voting'.[65] He also discounted bribery as a source of split voting and went on to identify three categories of the electorate: the independent electorate – those whose votes were neither bought nor determined by influence; the dependent electorate – electors both of whose votes were controlled or bought by some other person; and the cross-pressured electorate – electors for whom only one of their votes was sold or influenced.

He proposed a reasonable assumption that independent electors 'sought to use their votes to elect the candidates they most preferred'.[66] In order to consider the possible voting patterns of an independent elector in a two member seat with three candidates, two from one party and one from the other, he considered the position of a Conservative supporter in a constituency with two Conservative candidates (denoted by C1 and C2) and a single Liberal candidate (denoted by L1). It can be shown that in these circumstances 'depending on how large the utility differentials between C1, C2 and L are, and on the probabilities that the vote for C2 will defeat L or C1, it makes sense for a voter with these preferences to plump. For example, if the voter intensely prefers the arch-Tory views of C1 to the middle of the road Conservatism of C2, and does not see much difference between C2 and L, he is more likely to plump; and if the voter thinks it is certain that L will be elected, then the only possible effect of the vote for C2 is to defeat C1, and again he is more likely to plump. Similar points can be made about split voting. Another voter whose utility preferences can be summarised as L1>C1>C2 is more likely to cast a split vote for L and C1 on the basis that the larger the utility differential between C1 and C2 relative to that between C1 and L, and the larger the probability that a vote for C1 will defeat C2 relative to the probability that

[65] Cox, *The Efficient Secret*, p. 116.
[66] Ibid, p. 116.

such a vote will defeat L. For the purposes of this discussion, the important point is that both non-partisan plumping and split voting are more likely when voters perceive significant differences in the value (to themselves) of the election of candidates of the same party. Hence, from a theoretical perspective, any trend which reduces the differences which voters perceive between candidates of the same party will tend also to depress split voting and non-partisan plumping'.[67] It further follows, given the importance of these rates to the success or otherwise of a single candidate strategy in two member constituencies that these strategies are more likely to be successful, and, therefore, more likely to be adopted, in these situations, namely where voters see significant differences between the two candidates of the majority party.

[67] Ibid, p. 117.

Appendix II Selected electoral statistics

The following tables give, for the three general elections, certain important electoral statistics which have been calculated in accordance with the methodology described in Appendix I. Constituencies have been categorised as described in the *Definitions*.

Number of voters voting for each party

	1868	1874	1880
Southern English Boroughs			
0-1500			
Conservative	12677	15095	19065
Liberal	11968	13898	19059
1500-7500			
Conservative	50837	66746	71265
Liberal	63580	66614	79937
>7500			
Conservative	74429	104248	139199
Liberal	134249	105926	156725
Southern English Boroughs – Total			
Conservative	137943	186088	229529
Liberal	209796	186437	255720
Northern English Boroughs			
0-1500			
Conservative	4453	4118	5660
Liberal	5191	5149	6907
1500-7500			
Conservative	37684	47623	50493
Liberal	49221	55364	71070
>7500			
Conservative	110686	171290	181243
Liberal	215352	232781	301230
Northern English Boroughs - Total			
Conservative	152823	223031	237395
Liberal	269764	293293	379206
Total English Boroughs			
Conservative	290765	409119	466924
Liberal	479560	479730	634925
Southern English Counties			
Conservative	98836	75463	117712
Liberal	86972	53937	99887
Northern English Counties			
Conservative	105303	71232	136068
Liberal	90265	67407	139048
Total English Counties			
Conservative	204139	146695	253780
Liberal	177237	121343	238935
Total South			

Conservative	236778	261551	347240
Liberal	296768	240374	355607
Total North			
Conservative	258126	294263	373463
Liberal	360029	360699	518254
Total England			
Conservative	494904	555813	720703
Liberal	656797	601073	873860
Welsh Counties			
Conservative	14286	14653	18381
Liberal	12226	14229	23401
Welsh Boroughs			
Conservative	8382	13693	16543
Liberal	25015	27228	25250
Total Wales			
Conservative	22668	28346	34924
Liberal	37241	41457	48651
Scottish Counties			
Conservative	10853	18158	26489
Liberal	17706	20816	33221
Scottish Boroughs			
Conservative	13132	31712	36310
Liberal	70055	80481	101266
Total Scotland			
Conservative	23985	49870	62799
Liberal	87761	101297	134487
Great Britain Total			
Conservative	541557	634028	818425
Liberal	781799	743826	1056998

Percentage share of the vote

	1868	1874	1880
Southern English Boroughs			
0-1500			
Conservative	51.4%	52.1%	50.0%
Liberal	48.6%	47.9%	50.0%
1500-7500			
Conservative	44.2%	50.0%	47.1%
Liberal	55.8%	50.0%	52.9%
>7500			
Conservative	35.7%	49.6%	47.0%
Liberal	64.3%	50.4%	53.0%
Southern English Boroughs - Total			
Conservative	39.7%	50.0%	47.3%
Liberal	60.3%	54.0%	52.7%
Northern English Boroughs			
0-1500			
Conservative	46.2%	44.4%	45.0%
Liberal	53.8%	55.6%	55.0%
1500-7500			
Conservative	43.4%	46.2%	41.5%
Liberal	56.6%	53.8%	58.5%
>7500			
Conservative	36.2%	43.2%	38.5%
Liberal	63.8%	53.8%	61.5%
Northern English Boroughs - Total			
Conservative	36.2%	43.2%	38.5%
Liberal	63.8%	56.8%	61.5%
Total English Boroughs			
Conservative	37.7%	46.0%	42.4%
Liberal	62.3%	54.0%	57.6%
Southern English Counties			
Conservative	53.2%	58.3%	54.1%
Liberal	46.8%	41.7%	45.9%
Northern English Counties			
Conservative	53.8%	51.4%	49.5%
Liberal	46.2%	48.6%	50.5%
Total English Counties			
Conservative	53.5%	54.7%	51.5%
Liberal	46.5%	45.3%	48.5%
Total South			
Conservative	44.4%	52.1%	49.4%
Liberal	55.6%	47.9%	49.4%
Total North			
Conservative	41.8%	44.9%	41.9%
Liberal	58.2%	55.1%	58.1%
Total England			

Conservative	43.0%	48.0%	45.2%
Liberal	57.0%	52.0%	54.8%
Welsh Counties			
Conservative	53.9%	50.7%	44.0%
Liberal	46.1%	49.3%	56.0%
Welsh Boroughs			
Conservative	25.1%	33.5%	39.6%
Liberal	74.9%	66.5%	60.4%
Total Wales			
Conservative	37.8%	40.6%	41.8%
Liberal	62.2%	59.4%	58.2%
Scottish Counties			
Conservative	38.0%	46.6%	44.4%
Liberal	62.0%	53.4%	55.6%
Scottish Boroughs			
Conservative	15.8%	28.3%	26.4%
Liberal	84.2%	71.7%	73.6%
Total Scotland			
Conservative	21.5%	33.0%	31.8%
Liberal	78.5%	67.0%	68.2%
Great Britain Total			
Conservative	40.9%	46.0%	43.6%
Liberal	59.1%	54.0%	56.4%

Electoral swing
to and (from) the Conservatives

		1874	1880
Southern English Boroughs			
0-1500		3.6%	-3.2%
1500-7500		5.4%	-4.3%
>7500		12.9%	-2.6%
Southern English Boroughs - Total		11.0%	10.7%
Northern English Boroughs			
0-1500		-0.4%	-3.3%
1500-7500		1.1%	-6.0%
>7500		5.2%	-6.1%
Northern English Boroughs - Total		4.1%	4.1%
Total English Boroughs		8.4%	-4.6%
Southern English Counties		6.4%	-4.4%
Northern English Counties		1.0%	-5.0%
Total English Counties		3.6%	-4.7%
Total South		10.3%	-3.6%
Total North		3.3%	-5.8%
Total England		7.5%	-4.6%
Welsh Counties		8.2%	-11.0%
Welsh Boroughs		5.1%	-2.0%
Total Wales		6.6%	-6.8%
Scottish Counties		7.2%	-3.4%
Scottish Boroughs		7.5%	-6.0%
Total Scotland		7.8%	-5.3%
Great Britain Total		7.5%	-4.8%

Appendix III Local party organisations in existence in the 1860s

Conservative Working Men's Associations in existence in the 1860s

Constituency in which association located	*Electorate in 1868*
Ashton-under-Lyne	4822
Bath	5024
Bewdley	1043
Birkenhead	5892
Birmingham	42042
Blackburn	9183
Bolton	12650
Bradford	21518
Brighton	8661
Bristol	21153
Buckingham	948
Burnley	6417
Bury	5587
Cambridge City	4000
Carlisle	4537
Chatham	4518
Chelsea	17408
Cheltenham	3536
Chichester	1195
Colchester	2970
Coventry	7925
Derby	9777
Devizes	858
Devonport	3374
Dewesbury	7072
Dover	3392

Durham	1756
Exeter	6153
Finsbury	33601
Gateshead	5578
Gloucester	4737
Grantham	2018
Gravesend	2722
Greenwich	15990
Guildford	1219
Halifax	9328
Harwich	622
Hastings	2801
Hereford	2380
Hertford	922
Horsham	799
Huddersfield	11242
Hull	17146
Ipswich	5352
Kidderminster	2323
King's Lynn	2514
Lambeth	33377
Leeds	39244
Leicester	15161
Lewes	1350
Liverpool	39645
London	20185
Macclesfield	4737
Maidstone	3420
Manchester	48256
Marylebone	35575
Middlesborough	5196
Newcastle-on-Tyne	18557

Newcastle-under Lyme	2849
Norwich	13296
Nottingham	14168
Oldham	13454
Oxford City	5328
Penryn and Falmouth	1808
Peterborough	2461
Plymouth	4840
Portsmouth	11597
Preston	10763
Reading	3228
Rochdale	9280
Rochester	2569
Salford	15862
Sheffield	29955
Southampton	5696
Southwark	17703
Stafford	3152
Stalybridge	5338
Stockport	5702
Stockton	4492
Stroud	5642
Sunderland	11364
Tower Hamlets	32546
Tynemouth	2601
Wakefield	3627
Walsall	6047
Warrington	4470
Warwick	1688
Westminster	18879
Whitby	2058
Wigan	3939

Winchester	1621
Windsor	1777
Wolverhampton	15772
York	9088

Liberal Registration Associations in existence in the 1860s

Constituency in which association located	*Electorate in 1868*
Abingdon	801
Bath	5024
Bedford	2127
Birkenhead	5892
Birmingham	42042
Blackburn	9183
Bolton	12650
Bristol	21153
Burnley	6417
Cambridge City	4000
Canterbury	3001
Chelsea	17408
Cheltenham	3536
Cheshire, East	6276
Coventry	7925
Darlington	3057
Devonport	3374
Devonshire, North	9260
Devonshire, South	8047
Dover	3392
Durham	1756
Durham, South	9532
Durham, North	10576
Essex, South	7127

Exeter	6153
Finsbury	33601
Gloucester	4737
Gloucestershire, East	8858
Gloucestershire, West	11463
Gravesend	2722
Halifax	9328
Harwich	622
Hastings	2801
Hertford	922
Hertfordshire	9423
Huddersfield	11242
Hull	17146
Kent, East	13107
Kent, West	8828
Kidderminster	2323
Lambeth	33377
Lancashire, North	14399
Lancashire, North-east	8649
Lancashire, South-east	19340
Lancashire, South-west	21261
Leeds	39244
Leicester	15161
Lewes	1350
Lincolnshire, Mid	8694
Lincolnshire, North	9436
Lincolnshire, South	10476
Liverpool	39645
London	20185
Macclesfield	4737
Maidstone	3420
Manchester	48256

Middlesex	25196
Norfolk, North	6432
Norfolk, South	7709
Norfolk, West	7062
Northampton	6621
Nottingham	14168
Nottinghamshire, North	5205
Preston	10763
Salford	15862
Sheffield	29955
Southampton	5696
Southwark	17703
Stafford	3152
Staffordshire, North	10261
Stockton	4492
Sunderland	11364
Tewkesbury	745
Tiverton	1155
Tower Hamlets	32546
Wakefield	3627
Warwickshire, North	10266
Westminster	18879
Wigan	3939
Windsor	1777
Wolverhampton	15772
Worcester	5542
Yorkshire, North	19205
Yorkshire, West Riding, North	16918
Yorkshire, West Riding, South	19908

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Alnwick Mercury
Baner ac Amserau Cymru
Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette
Belfast Morning News
Belfast News-Letter
Berkshire Chronicle
Birmingham Daily Post
Birmingham Gazette
Birmingham Journal
Blackburn Standard
Bradford Observer
British Lion
Bristol Mercury
Bucks Herald
Burnley Advertiser
Burnley Gazette
Bury and Norwich Post
Bury Times
Caledonian Mercury
Cambridge Chronicle and Journal
Cambridge Independent Press
Carlisle Journal
Chelmsford Chronicle
Cheltenham Chronicle
Cheltenham Looker-On
Cheshire Observer
Chester Chronicle
Cork Examiner
County Courts Chronicle
Coventry Herald
Coventry Times
Derby Mercury
Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald
Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette
Dorset County Chronicle
Dover Express
Dublin Evening Mail
Dumfries and Galloway Standard
Dundee Advertiser
Dundee Courier
Dundee, Perth, and Cupar Advertiser
Dunfermline Press
Dunfermline Saturday Press
East London Observer
Economist
Elgin Courant, and Morayshire Advertiser
Elgin Courier
Era, The
Essex Standard
Examiner, The
Exeter and Plymouth Gazette
Exeter and Plymouth Gazette Daily Telegrams
Exeter Flying Post
Falkirk Herald
Fife Herald
Freeman's Journal
Glasgow Herald
Grantham Journal
Graphic, The
Hampshire Advertiser
Hampshire Telegraph
Hastings and St Leonards Observer
Hereford Journal

Hereford Times
Hertford Mercury and Reformer
Herts Guardian, Agricultural Journal, and General Advertiser
Huddersfield Chronicle
Hull Packet
Illustrated Police News
Ipswich Journal, The
Isle of Man Times
Isle of Wight Observer
Kendal Mercury
Kentish Chronicle
Kentish Gazette
Lancaster Gazette
Leamington Spa Courier
Leeds Intelligencer
Leeds Mercury
Leeds Times
Leicester Chronicle
Leicester Journal
Leicestershire Mercury
Lincolnshire Chronicle
Liverpool Daily Post
Liverpool Mercury
Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper
London Daily News
London Standard
Louth and North Lincolnshire Advertiser
Luton Times and Advertiser
Maidstone Telegraph
Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser
Manchester Times
Middlesex Chronicle
Morning Chronicle
Morning Post
Morpeth Herald
Newcastle Courant
Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury
Newcastle Journal
Norfolk Chronicle
Norfolk News
North Devon Journal
North Wales Chronicle
Northampton Mercury
Northern Echo
Nottinghamshire Guardian
Oxford Journal
Pall Mall Gazette
Perry's Bankrupt Gazette
Poor Law Unions' Gazette
Preston Chronicle
Reading Mercury
Reynolds's Newspaper
Rochdale Observer
Royal Cornwall Gazette
Salisbury and Winchester Journal
Salopian Journal
Sheffield Daily Telegraph
Sheffield Independent
Sherborne Mercury
Shields Daily Gazette
Shoreditch Observer
Somerset County Gazette
South London Chronicle
South London Press

Staffordshire Sentinel and Commercial & General Advertiser
Stamford Mercury
Star, The
Stirling Observer
Surrey Advertiser
Sussex Advertiser
Taunton Courier, and Western Advertiser
Wells Journal
West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser
West Middlesex Advertiser and Family Journal
Western Daily Press
Western Gazette
Western Mail
Western Times
Westmorland Gazette
Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald
Worcester Journal
Worcestershire Chronicle
Wrexham Advertiser
Y Goleuad
York Herald
Yorkshire Gazette

Appendix IV Counties and boroughs by category

English Counties North

Cheshire, East

Cheshire, Mid

Cheshire, West

Cumberland, East

Cumberland, West

Derbyshire, East

Derbyshire, North

Derbyshire, South

Durham, South

Durham,North

Lancashire, North

Lancashire, North-east

Lancashire, South-east

Lancashire, South-west

Leicestershire, North

Leicestershire, South

Lincolnshire, Mid

Lincolnshire, North

Lincolnshire, South

Nottinghamshire, North

Nottinghamshire, South

Rutlandshire

Salop, North (Shropshire)

Salop, South (Shropshire)

Staffordshire, East

Staffordshire, North

Staffordshire, West

Warwickshire, North

Warwickshire, South

Westmorland

Yorkshire, East

Yorkshire, North

Yorkshire, West Riding, East

Yorkshire, West Riding, North

Yorkshire, West Riding, South

English Counties South

Bedfordshire

Berks

Bucks

Cambridgeshire

Cornwall, East

Cornwall, West

Devonshire, East

Devonshire, North

Devonshire, South

Dorsetshire

Essex, South

Essex, West

Essex. East

Gloucestershire, East

Gloucestershire, West

Hants, North

Hants, South

Herefordshire

Hertfordshire

Huntingdonshire

Kent, East

Kent, Mid

Kent, West

Middlesex

Norfolk, North

Norfolk, South

Norfolk, West

Northampton, North

Northamptonshire, South

Northumberland, North

Northumberland, South

Oxfordshire

Somersetshire, East

Somersetshire, Mid

Somersetshire, West

Suffolk, East

Suffolk, West

Surrey, East

Surrey, Mid

Surrey, West

Sussex, East

Sussex, West

Wight, Isle of

Wilts, North

Wilts, South

Worcestershire, East

Worcestershire, West

English Boroughs North <1500

Berwick

Cockermouth

Droitwich

Knaresborough

Leominster

Lichfield

Malmesbury

Malton

Northallerton

Richmond

Ripon

Stamford

Thirsk

English Boroughs North 1500 - 7500

Ashton-under-Lyne

Birkenhead

Boston

Burnley

Bury

Carlisle

Chester

Clitheroe

Darlington

Durham

Grantham

Grimsby

Hartlepool

Kendal

Lincoln

Macclesfield

Morpeth

Newark

Newcastle-under Lyme

Pontefract

Scarborough

Shrewsbury

Stafford

Stalybridge

Stockton

Tamworth

Tynemouth

Wakefield

Warrington

Warwick

Whitby

Whitehaven

Wigan

English Boroughs North >7500

Birmingham

Blackburn

Bolton

Bradford

Derby

Dewesbury

Dudley

Gateshead

Halifax

Huddersfield

Hull

Leeds

Leicester

Liverpool

Manchester

Middlesborough

Newcastle-on-Tyne

Nottingham

Oldham

Preston

Retford

Rochdale

Salford

Sheffield

Shields (South Shields)

Stockport

Stoke

Sunderland

Walsall

Wednesbury

Wolverhampton

York

English Boroughs South <1500

Abingdon

Andover

Bewdley
Bodmin
Bridgnorth
Bridport
Buckingham
Calne
Chichester
Chippenham
Cirencester
Devizes
Dorchester
Evesham
Eye
Frome
Guildford
Harwich
Helston
Hertford
Horsham
Huntingdon
Launceston
Lewes
Liskeard
Ludlow
Lymington
Marlborough
Marlow
Midhurst
Newport
Petersfield
Rye
Shaftesbury
St. Ives
Tavistock

Tewkesbury

Tiverton

Wallingford

Wareham

Westbury

Weymouth

Wilton

Woodstock

English Boroughs South 1500 - 7500

Aylesbury

Banbury

Barnstaple

Bath

Bedford

Bury St.Edmunds

Cambridge City

Canterbury

Chatham

Cheltenham

Christchurch

Colchester

Cricklade

Devonport

Dover

Exeter

Gloucester

Gravesend

Hastings

Hereford

Hythe

Ipswich

Kidderminster

King's Lynn

Maidstone

Maldon

Northampton

Oxford City

Penryn and Falmouth

Peterborough

Plymouth

Poole

Reading

Rochester

Salisbury

Sandwich

Shoreham

Southampton

Stroud

Taunton

Truro

Wenlock

Winchester

Windsor

Worcester

Wycombe

English Boroughs South >7500

Coventry

Brighton

Portsmouth

Norwich

Greenwich

Westminster

Southwark

London

Bristol

Chelsea

Marylebone

Tower Hamlets

Finsbury

Lambeth

Hackney

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Bury Post

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Cheshire Observer

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Manchester Times
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Nottinghamshire Guardian
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Aberdeen Evening Express 1879 - 1880
Aberdeen Journal
Aldershot Military Gazette
Alnwick Mercury
Ayr Advertiser, or, West Country Journal
Baner ac Amserau Cymru
Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette
Belfast Morning News
Belfast News-Letter 1828 - 1900
Berkshire Chronicle 1825 - 1870
Berwickshire News and General Advertiser 1870 - 1904
Birmingham Daily Post 1857 - 1900
Birmingham Gazette 1741 - 1871

Birmingham Journal 1859 - 1869

Blackburn Standard 1835 - 1900

Bradford Observer 1834 - 1875

Bristol Mercury 1716 - 1900

Bucks Herald 1833 - 1909

Burnley Advertiser 1853 - 1880

Burnley Express 1877 - 1904

Burnley Gazette 1863 - 1875

Bury and Norwich Post 1801 - 1900

Bury Times 1858 – 1867

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Dover Express 1858 - 1949

Dublin Evening Mail 1849 - 1871

Dumfries and Galloway Standard 1844 - 1866

Dundee Advertiser 1861 - 1892

Dundee Courier 1844 - 1950

Dundee, Perth, and Cupar Advertiser1839 - 1864

Dunfermline Press 1859 - 1864

Dunfermline Saturday Press 1859 - 1888

East London Observer 1857 - 1879

Edinburgh Evening News 1873 - 1904

Elgin Courant and Morayshire Advertiser 1839 - 1862

Elgin Courier 1845 - 1867

Era, The 1838 - 1900

Essex Newsman 1870 - 1950

Essex Standard 1831 - 1900

Evening Telegraph 1877 - 1950

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Exeter and Plymouth Gazette 1827 - 1950

Exeter and Plymouth Gazette Daily Telegrams 1869 - 1885

Exeter Flying Post 1800 - 1900

Falkirk Herald 1845 - 1904

Fife Herald 1833 - 1885

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Glasgow Herald 1820 - 1900

Gloucester Citizen 1877 - 1950

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Gloucestershire Echo 1932 - 1950

Grantham Journal 1854 - 1914

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Hampshire Advertiser 1830 - 1900

Hampshire Telegraph 1799 - 1900

Hartlepool Mail 1879 - 1898

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Hereford Journal 1781 - 1867

Hereford Times 1832 - 1934

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Herts Guardian, Agricultural Journal, and General Advertiser 1852 - 1867

Huddersfield Chronicle 1850 - 1900

Hull Packet 1800 - 1886

Illustrated Police News 1867 - 1900

Inverness Courier 1817 - 1930

Ipswich Journal 1720 - 1800

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Isle of Man Times 1869 - 1900

Isle of Wight Observer 1852 - 1900

Islington Gazette 1856 - 1872

John o' Groat Journal 1836 - 1872

Kendal Mercury 1834 - 1869

Kent & Sussex Courier 1873 - 1909

Kentish Chronicle 1859 - 1867

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Lancaster Gazette 1801 - 1894

Leamington Spa Courier 1828 - 1913

Leeds Intelligencer 1754 - 1866

Leeds Mercury 1807 - 1900

Leeds Times 1833 - 1901

Leicester Chronicle 1827 - 1900

Leicester Journal 1810 - 1881

Leicestershire Mercury 1837 - 1864

Lichfield Mercury 1883 - 1965

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Liverpool Daily Post 1855 - 1869

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Luton Times and Advertiser 1856 - 1914

Maidstone Telegraph 1859 - 1871

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Westmorland Gazette 1818 - 1898

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Worcester Herald 1829 - 1871

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Wrexham Advertiser 1854 - 1900

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